



Humana Communitas. Pope Francis' Letter for the 25th of the Pontifical Academy for Life



"Our shared humanity demands a global approach to the questions raised by the dialogue between diverse cultures and societies that, in today's world, are in increasingly close contact. May the Academy for Life be a place for courageous dialogue in the service of the common good. I encourage you not to be afraid to advance arguments and formulations that can serve as a basis for intercultural and interreligious, as well as interdisciplinary, exchanges".

This is Pope Francis' mandate in the Letter Humana Communitas (The Human Community), for the 25th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Academy (February 11th, 1994 - February 11th, 2019). The Letter was released January 15th and was presented in a press conference in the Vatican.

Pope Francis underlines the importance of a Global Bioethics approach: "We know that the threshold of basic respect for human life is being crossed, and brutally at that, not only by instances of individual conduct but also by the effects of societal choices and structures. Business strategies and the pace of technological growth now, as never before, condition biomedical research, educational priorities, investment decisions and the quality of interpersonal relationships. The possibility of directing economic development and scientific progress towards the covenant between man and woman, towards caring for our common humanity and towards the dignity of the human person, surely arises from a love for creation that faith helps us to deepen and illuminate. The prospect of a global bioethics, with a broad vision and a concern for the impact of the environment on life and health, offers a significant opportunity for strengthening the new covenant between the Gospel and creation".

Pope Francis writes again: "But also to take part in the discussion of human rights, which are central to the search for universally acceptable criteria for decisions. At stake is the understanding and exercise of a justice that demonstrates the essential role of responsibility in the discussion of human rights and about their close correlation with duties, beginning with solidarity with those in greatest need".

And adds to make clear the mandate of the Academy: "Another area calling for study is that of the new technologies described as 'emergent' and 'convergent'. These include information and communication technologies, biotechnologies, nanotechnologies and robotics. Relying on results obtained from physics, genetics and neuroscience, as well as on increasingly powerful computing capabilities, profound interventions on living organisms are now possible. Even the human body is subject to interventions capable of modifying not only its functions and capabilities, but also its ways of relating on personal and societal levels, with the result that it is increasingly exposed to market forces. There is a pressing need, then, to understand these epochal changes and new frontiers in order to determine how to place them at the service of the human person, while respecting and promoting the intrinsic dignity of all. This task is extremely demanding, given its complexity and the unpredictability of future developments; consequently, it requires even greater discernment than usual. We can define this discernment as "a sincere work of conscience, in its effort to know the possible good on the basis of which to engage responsibly in the correct exercise of practical reason" (Synod of Bishops on Young People, Final Document [27 October 2018], 109). This process of research and evaluation thus entails the workings of the moral conscience and, for the believer, is part of his or her relationship with the Lord Jesus, in the desire to put on the mind of Christ in our actions and choices (cf. Phil 2:5)".

Again, Pope Francis underlines that "The scientific community of the Pontifical Academy for Life has demonstrated, over the past twenty-five years, its ability to enter into this dialogue and to offer its own competent and respected contribution. A sign of this is its constant effort to promote and protect human life at every stage of its development, its condemnation of abortion and euthanasia as extremely grave evils that contradict the Spirit of life and plunge us into the anti-culture of death. These efforts must certainly continue, with an eye to emerging issues and challenges that can serve as an opportunity for us to grow in the faith, to understand it more deeply and to communicate it more effectively to the people of our time".