



H. E. Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia President of the Pontifical Academy for Life

Yesterday we concluded the 28th General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life by addressing the topic of emerging and converging technologies (nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, algorithms, intervention on human genome, cognitive science, neuroscience), which Pope Francis urged us to address already in his Letter *Humana Communitas*, which he wrote to us for the 25th anniversary of the Pontifical Academy for Life.

The Academy had already addressed the challenge posed to humanity by the new frontier of Artificial Intelligence, which has been occupying the headlines of many newspapers in recent months. In February 2020, the Rome Call for A.I. Ethics was signed in Rome, and last January, leaders of Judaism and Islam also joined. Next year we will go to Hiroshima for the signing by other world religions, while several universities in the world have joined and other institutions such as Confindustria and the world of politics itself are also asking to participate.

In this Assembly, the initial theme has expanded and is about the systemic interaction of these emerging and converging technologies that are developing at a very fast pace and while they can give a tremendous contribution to the betterment of humanity, at the same time they can lead to a radical modification of the human being. We are talking about post-humanism, enhanced man, and so on. A few years ago, in the General Assembly where we were discussing robotics, Japanese scientist Hiroshi Ishiguro stated that he spoke of today's humanity as the last organic generation, the next one would be synthetic. We would be facing the radical transformation of what is human.

The Pontifical Academy for Life has felt the responsibility to face this new frontier that radically involves the human being aware that the ethical dimension is crucial to save the human dimension that is common to all of us. We are living through that change of epoch of which Pope Francis often speaks. For the first time in history men can destroy themselves: first with nuclear weapons, then with the ecological crisis and finally with new technologies. This is an issue that affects both creation and the human family, the entire planet.

In such a context, we have felt the urgency of a new organizational structure for the Academy that includes, but is not limited to, the presence of scientists from different branches of science, different countries, different cultures and even different faiths, in the awareness that topics such as these (the new emerging and converging technologies) need to be approached in a multifaceted way, as happened at the beginning of the second millennium when the "universitas scientiarum" were born. They arose everywhere in the world, especially in the West: all of them - each with its specific contribution - even joined together in one place to contaminate each other.

Today the Pontifical Academy for Life intends in a certain way to revive that spirit and perspective. The human dimension that is common to us in fact requires to be approached in a holistic way - Pope Francis would say that the whole is superior to the parts -, no longer in a sectoral and disjointed way thus losing the treasure of the unity of the human family (which is obviously pluralistic by definition) that lives in the only house that must be preserved in all its beauty and made inhabitable by everybody. This vision - outlined by the two latest encyclicals *Laudato sì* and *Fratelli tutti* - informs the commitment of the Pontifical Academy for Life.

Pope Francis' speech was especially important. And the debate that took place both in the General Assembly and in the Workshops was really fruitful. I will leave it to the other speakers here to present some of the themes discussed. For the Pontifical Academy for Life, of course, this is not a matter of leaving aside the themes it has traditionally dealt with, but of broadening the horizon of its commitment, precisely because it is not only birth and death that are at stake, which of course remain crucial themes (and the Academy continues to prompt reflection and organize studies and conferences along these lines), but humanity as a whole is at stake here: the broadening of bioethics as understood until now and the very semantic dimension of the word Life are called into question.

Finally, I want to point out that this Assembly celebrated the Second Edition of the “Guardian of Life” Award. In 2021, it was awarded to the American Dale Recinella, a lay chaplain on Florida's death row. This 2023 edition gave the award to Dr. Magdalen Awor, a nurse, a collaborator of the Association “Doctors with Africa-CUAMM”. She left her native Uganda to operate in South Sudan. The award was given to her "in recognition of outstanding service on behalf of nascent life in some of the most deprived areas on the African continent." Thank you to Dr. Awor present here in the Press Room and to the Association Doctors with Africa-CUAMM.