

To the Participants in the Meeting
“Common Good: Theory and Practice”

(Translation – Not official)

I am pleased to offer my cordial greetings to all the participants in the meeting “Common Good: Theory and Practice”, organized by the Pontifical Academy for Life.

Among the countless reflections on the theme of the common good, this meeting is particularly relevant for at least two reasons.

Firstly, it is promoted by the Pontifical Academy for Life. If we really want to safeguard human life in every context and situation, we must place the themes concerning life in the social and cultural contexts in which they originated, even those that have traditionally been part of the bioethical debate. If the defence of life limits itself to only a few aspects or moments, or entirely denies the existential, social and cultural dimensions, it risks being ineffective, and falling into the temptation of an ideological approach, where abstract principles are defended, rather than concrete people. The pursuit of the common good and justice are essential and indispensable for the defence of all human life, especially of the most fragile and defenceless, and for the respect of the entire ecosystem that we inhabit.

The second reason I would like to emphasise is that this evening two women with different responsibilities and backgrounds will take to the stage. In society as in the Church, we need to hear women's voices; we need different forms of knowledge to cooperate in view of formulating a broad and wise reflection on the future of humankind; we need all the world's cultures to offer their contribution and express their needs and resources. Only in this way can we *‘think and create an open world’*, as I called for in Chapter Three of my Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*.

In line with this Encyclical, I want to reassert that universal fraternity is, in some way, a ‘personal’, profound understanding of the common good, perceived not simply as an idea, a political and social project, rather as a communion of faces, stories, and persons. The common good is first and foremost a practice, built on fraternal acceptance and the common pursuit of truth and justice. In a world marked by so many conflicts and oppositions that resulted from the inability to look beyond specific interests, it is of great importance to recall the common good, one of the cornerstones of the Church's social teaching. We need solid economic theories that take up and develop this theme in its specificity, so that it can become a principle effectively inspiring political choices (as I indicated in my Encyclical *Laudato Si*) and not just something invoked in words, but disregarded in deeds.

I gladly impart my blessing to all of you and ask you to please pray for me.

Vatican City, 12th November 2024

FRANCIS