



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE
CHRISTIAN UNION OF THE BUSINESS EXECUTIVES (UNIAPAC)**

Sala Regia

Thursday, 17 November 2016

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear Cardinal,

Mr President of UNIAPAC,

Dear friends,

You have come to Rome — to the Vatican — in response to the invitation of Cardinal Peter Turkson and the authorities of the International Christian Union of Business Executives, with the noble goal of reflecting on the role of business people as agents of economic and social inclusion. I wish to assure you that, from this moment on, you will have my encouragement and prayers for your work. God's Providence has made this UNIAPAC meeting coincide with the conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. All human activities, including business, can be an exercise in mercy, which is partaking in God's love for mankind.

Business activity constantly entails endless risks. In the parables of the treasure hidden in a field (cf. Mt 13:44) and of the fine pearls (cf. Mt 13:45), Jesus compares the attainment of the Kingdom of Heaven to entrepreneurial risk. Today I wish to reflect with you on three risks: the risk of using money well, the risk of honesty, and the risk of fraternity.

First of all, the risk of using money. When speaking about businesses we immediately have to address one of the most difficult issues of moral perception: money. I have often said that “money is the devil's dung”, repeating what Holy Fathers have said in the past. Leo XIII, who initiated the social doctrine of the Church, noted that the history of the 19th century had divided nations “into two classes separated by a wide chasm” (Apostolic Letter *Rerum Novarum*, n. 47). Forty years

later, Pius XI predicted the growth of an “international imperialism” of finance (Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno*, n. 109). Forty years after that, Paul VI, referring to *Rerum Novarum*, warned that the excessive concentration of wealth and power could “lead to a new and abusive form of economic domination on the social, cultural and even political level” (Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens*, n. 44).

In the parable of the dishonest steward, Jesus urges us to take responsibility for our friends with dishonest wealth, in order to be welcomed in the eternal habitations (cf. Lk 16:9-15). All of the Fathers of the Church have interpreted these words to mean that wealth is good when it is placed at the service of our neighbours, otherwise it is unjust (cf. *Catena Aurea*: The Gospel according to Luke, 16:8-13). Thus, money must serve, not rule. This is a key principle: money must serve, not rule. Money is only a technical instrument of intermediation, of comparison of values and rights, of the fulfilment of duties and saving. Like any technical instrument, money does not have a neutral value, but acquires value based on the aims and circumstances in which it is used. When we claim that money is neutral, we fall under its power. Enterprises must not exist to earn money, even though money serves to measure their functioning. Enterprises exist to serve.

Therefore, it is urgent to restore the social meaning of financial and banking activities, with the best intelligence and imagination of business executives. This means assuming the risk of making life more complicated, of having to give up certain financial gains. Credit must be accessible for households, for small and medium-sized enterprises, for farmers, for educational activities, especially at the primary level, for general healthcare, for the improvement and integration of the poorest urban areas. A market-based financial logic makes credit more accessible and cheaper for those who already have resources, and more expensive and difficult for those who have less, to the point of leaving the poorest segments of the population in the hands of ruthless usurers. Likewise, at the international level, the financing of the poorest countries is easily transformed into a usurious activity. This is one of the great challenges for businesses, and for economists in general, who are called upon to achieve a stable and sufficient flow of credit that excludes no one and that can be paid off under fair and accessible conditions.

While admitting it is possible to create business mechanisms that are available to all and that function to everyone’s benefit, we must recognize that generous and abundant gratuitousness will always be necessary. It will also be necessary for the State to intervene to protect certain collective goods and ensure the fulfilment of basic human needs. My predecessor, Saint John Paul II, said that ignoring this leads to “an ‘idolatry’ of the market” (Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, n. 40).

There is a second risk that must be assumed by business executives. The risk of honesty. Corruption is the worst social evil. It is the lie of seeking profit for oneself or one’s own group with only the appearance of serving society. It is the destruction of the social fabric behind the semblance of fulfilling the law. It is the law of the jungle disguised by apparent social rationality. It

is the deceit and exploitation of the weakest or least informed. It is the most vulgar selfishness, hidden behind apparent generosity. Corruption is generated by the adoration of money and returns to the corrupt, a prisoner of that same adoration. Corruption is a fraud against democracy and it opens the doors to other terrible evils such as drugs, prostitution and human trafficking, slavery, organ trafficking, arms trafficking, and so on. Corruption is becoming followers of the devil, the father of falsehood.

Yet, “corruption is not a vice limited to political life. There is corruption in politics, there is corruption in the business world, there is corruption in the communications media, there is corruption in the churches, but also there is corruption in the social organizations and popular movements” (*Speech to Participants in the Third World Meeting of Popular Movements*, 5 November 2016).

One of the necessary conditions for social progress is the absence of corruption. Entrepreneurs may be tempted to give in to attempts at blackmail or extortion, justifying themselves with the thought of saving their company and its community of workers, or thinking that this way they will allow the company to grow and one day they will be able to free themselves from that evil. It is also possible for entrepreneurs to fall into the temptation of thinking that it is something everyone does, that small acts of corruption aimed at obtaining small advantages are not so important. Any attempted corruption, whether active or passive, is already the start of adoring Mammon.

The third risk is that of fraternity. We have recalled that Saint John Paul II taught us that “Even prior to the logic of a fair exchange ... there exists something which is due to man because he is man, by reason of his lofty dignity” (Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, n. 34). Benedict XVI also insisted on the importance of gratuitousness, as an unavoidable element of social and economic life. He said: “Charity in truth places man before the astonishing experience of gift ... which expresses and makes present his transcendent dimension.... Economic, social and political development ... needs to make room for the principle of gratuitousness as an expression of fraternity” (Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 34).

Business activity must always include the element of gratuitousness. Fair relationships between managers and workers must be respected and demanded by all parties; but at the same time, an enterprise is a community of work in which everyone deserves fraternal respect and appreciation from their superiors, co-workers and subordinates. Respect for the other as brother or sister must also extend to the local community in which the enterprise is physically located, and in a certain sense, all of the enterprise’s legal and economic relationships must be moderated, enveloped in a climate of respect and fraternity.

There is no shortage of examples of actions of solidarity in favour of those most in need, carried out by people in businesses, clinics, universities, or other work and study communities. This should be a common way of acting, the result of profound convictions in everyone, to prevent it

from becoming only an occasional activity to soothe one's conscience, or even worse, a way to obtain a return in terms of publicity.

With regard to fraternity, I cannot but share with you the issue of emigration and refugees, which burdens our hearts. Today emigration and the movement of a multitude of people in search of protection have become a dramatic human problem. The Holy See and the local Churches are making extraordinary efforts to effectively deal with the causes of this situation, seeking the pacification of the regions and countries at war and promoting the spirit of welcoming; but we don't always get all that we want. I am asking you for help as well. On the one hand, try to convince governments to renounce any type of activities of war. As is often said in business environments, a "bad" agreement is always better than a "good" fight. On the other hand, collaborate to create sources of worthy, stable and abundant work, both in the places of origin and in those of arrival, and in the latter, for both the local population and for immigrants. Immigration must continue to be an important factor in development.

Most of us here belong to families of emigrants. Our grandparents or parents came from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Lebanon or other countries, to South or North America, almost always under conditions of extreme poverty. They were able to support a family, progress even to the point of becoming entrepreneurs because they found societies that welcomed them, which at times were poor like them, but were willing to share what little they had. Preserve and pass on this spirit with Christian roots, showing your entrepreneurial talent here as well.

For me UNIAPAC and ACDE evoke the memory of the Argentinian entrepreneur Enrique Shaw, one of the founders, whose cause for beatification I promoted when I was Archbishop of Buenos Aires. I urge you to follow his example, and that Catholics ask for his intercession to be good business people.

The Gospel of two Sundays ago spoke of the vocation of Zacchaeus (cf. Lk 19:1-10), that rich man, head of the tax collectors of Jericho, who climbed a tree so he could see Jesus, and the Lord's gaze led him to a profound conversion. I hope this Conference may be like the sycamore of Jericho, a tree which you are all able to climb, so that through the scientific discussion of the aspects of business activity, you will find Jesus' gaze, and this will produce effective guidance to ensure that the activities of all of your enterprises always and effectively promote the common good.

I thank you for this visit to the Successor of Saint Peter and I ask you to convey my blessing to all of your employees and associates and their families. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana