



The Holy See

LETTER SENT BY THE HOLY FATHER FOR THE EVENT “ECONOMY OF FRANCESCO”

[Assisi, 26 - 28 March 2020]

To Young Economists and Entrepreneurs Worldwide

Dear Friends,

I am writing to invite you to take part in an initiative very close to my heart. An event that will allow me to encounter young men and women studying economics and interested in a different kind of economy: one that brings life not death, one that is inclusive and not exclusive, humane and not dehumanizing, one that cares for the environment and does not despoil it. An event that will help bring us together and allow us to meet one another and eventually enter into a “covenant” to *change today’s economy and to give a soul to the economy of tomorrow.*

Surely there is a need to “re-animate” the economy! And where better to do so than Assisi, which has for centuries eloquently symbolized a humanism of fraternity? Saint John Paul II chose Assisi as the icon of a culture of peace. For me, it is also a fitting place to inspire a new economy. There Francis stripped himself of all worldliness in order to choose God as the compass of his life, becoming poor with the poor, a brother to all. His decision to embrace poverty also gave rise to a vision of economics that remains most timely. A vision that can give hope to our future and benefit not only the poorest of the poor, but our entire human family. A vision that is also necessary for the fate of the entire planet, our common home, “our sister Mother Earth”, in the words of Saint Francis in his *Canticle of the Sun*.

In my Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si’*, I emphasized that, today more than ever, everything is deeply connected and that the safeguarding of the environment cannot be divorced from ensuring justice for the poor and finding answers to the structural problems of the global economy. We need to correct models of growth incapable of guaranteeing respect for the environment, openness to life, concern for the family, social equality, the dignity of workers and the rights of future generations.

Sadly, few have heard the appeal to acknowledge the gravity of the problems and, even more, to set in place a new economic model, the fruit of a culture of communion based on fraternity and equality.

Francis of Assisi is the outstanding example of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology. I think of the words spoken to him from the Crucifix in the little church of San Damiano: “Go, Francis, repair my house, which, as you see, is falling into ruin”. The repair of that house concerns all of us. It concerns the Church, society and the heart of each individual. Increasingly, it concerns the environment, which urgently demands a sound economy and a sustainable development that can heal its wounds and assure us of a worthy future.

Given this urgent need, each one of us is called to rethink his or her mental and moral priorities, to bring them into greater conformity with God’s commandments and the demands of the common good. But I thought especially of inviting *you young people*, because your desire for a better and happier future makes you even now a prophetic sign, pointing towards an economy attentive to the person and to the environment.

Dear young people, I know that you can hear in your hearts the ever more anguished plea of the earth and its poor, who cry out for help and for *responsibility*, for people who will *respond* and not turn away. If you listen to what your heart tells you, you will feel part of a new and courageous culture, you will not be afraid to face risks and work to build a new society. The risen Jesus is our strength! As I told you in Panama and I wrote in my Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*: “Please, do not leave it to others to be protagonists of change. You are the ones who hold the future! Through you, the future enters into the world. I ask you also to be protagonists of this transformation... I ask you to build the future, to work for a better world” (No. 174).

Your universities, your businesses and your organizations are workshops of hope for creating new ways of understanding the economy and progress, for combating the culture of waste, for giving voice to those who have none and for proposing new styles of life. Only when our economic and social system no longer produces even a single victim, a single person cast aside, will we be able to celebrate the feast of universal fraternity.

That is why I would like to meet you in Assisi: so that we can promote together, through a *common “covenant”*, a process of global change. One in which not only believers but all men and women of good will, beyond differences of creed and nationality, can participate, inspired by an ideal of fraternity attentive above all to the poor and excluded. I invite each of you to work for this covenant, committing yourselves individually and in groups to cultivate together the dream of a new humanism responsive to the expectations of men and women and to the plan of God.

The name of this event – *Economy of Francesco* – clearly evokes the Holy Man of Assisi and the Gospel that he lived in complete consistency, also on the social and economic level. Saint Francis

offers us an ideal and, in some sense, a programme. For me, who took his name, he is a constant source of inspiration.

With you, and through you, I will appeal to some of our best economists and entrepreneurs who are already working on the global level to create an economy consistent with these ideals. I am confident that they will respond. And I am confident above all in you young people, who are capable of dreaming and who are prepared to build, with the help of God, a more just and beautiful world.

Our meeting is planned for *26 to 28 March 2020*. Together with the Bishop of Assisi, whose predecessor Guido, eight centuries ago, received the young Francis in his house when he made the prophetic gesture of his stripping, I count on receiving you myself. I await you and even now, I greet you and I give you my blessing. Please, do not forget to pray for me.

From the Vatican, 1 May 2019

Memorial of Saint Joseph the Worker

Francis