

Pope Francis Speech – 14 November 2014

Good morning everyone!

On the occasion of the World Congress of Accountants, I wish to give you my special welcome and thank the President of the International Federation of Accountants for her words of introduction. You gathered together to focus on a shared vision of the future, comparing the different experiences gained in your countries of origin. It is a crucial moment both to tackle the issues that affect your profession today and to renew awareness of the fact that your profession serves the public interest. And, within your congress, you desired to include this moment, which recalls you to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as a perennial source of inspiration for personal and social renewal.

The current socio-economic climate urgently sets the employment issue. The employment issue: this is key. From your perspective of accounting professionals, you are fully aware of the dramatic reality many people are experiencing in these days, people who have precarious employments or have lost their job; families paying the consequences of this situation; young people seeking their first job and a decent employment. Many of them, above all immigrants, are forced to work “off the books”, deprived even of the basic juridical and economic safeguards.

In this context, temptation is strong to defend one’s own interest without being concerned with the common good, without taking much care of justice and legality. So everyone - but especially those who are in a profession that deals with the proper functioning of the economic life of a country - are required to play a positive, constructive role during their daily work, being aware that behind every document there is a story, there are faces. In this commitment – which, as I said, requires the collaboration of every one of us - the Christian professionals draw, every day, from the prayer and from the Word of God the strength first of all to accomplish well their duty, with competence and wisdom; and then “to go beyond”, which means meeting the persons in difficulty; using that creativity which allows you to find solutions in standstill situations; to make prevail the reasons of human dignity over a rigid red tape.

Economy and finance are dimensions of the human activity and can create occasions to meet, debate and cooperate, occasions of recognized rights and services rendered, and of a dignity affirmed into work. But in order to achieve this, it is necessary to always place the human being, with his dignity, at the center, combating the processes which tend to standardize everything and to always put money first. When money becomes the objective and the reason of each activity and initiative, then the utilitarian perspective prevails together with the fierce logic of the profit that does not have any respect for the person, with the consequent and widespread fall of values, such as solidarity and respect of the human being. Those who work in various positions in the economy and finance are called to make choices in favor of the social and economic wellness of the whole humanity, giving everybody the opportunity to achieve their own development.

You professional accountants, in your activity, are alongside businesses but also families and individuals, to provide your economic and financial counsel. I encourage you always to act responsibly, fostering relations based on loyalty, justice and, where possible, fraternity, tackling with courage, above all, the problems of the weaker and the poorer. Giving a concrete answer to economic and practical questions is not enough; there is need to raise and cultivate an ethics of the economy, of finance and of employment; there is need to keep the value of solidarity alive – solidarity, a word that today risks being removed from the dictionary– solidarity as a moral attitude, an expression of the attention to other people and their legitimate needs.

If we wish to leave to future generations an improved environmental, economic, cultural and social heritage, we are called to take up the responsibility to work for globalizing solidarity. Solidarity is a need arising from the same network of interconnections which develop together with the globalization. And the social doctrine of the Church teaches us that the principle of solidarity is effected in harmony with the principle of subsidiarity. Thanks to the effect of these two principles, processes are at the service of human beings and justice grows, that justice without which there can be no true and long lasting peace.

Leaving you with these simple hints for reflection, I entrust each one of you and your work to the protection of the Virgin Mary. I bless you from the heart and I ask you to please pray for me. Thank you.