



**DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING
INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

**Catholic Action:
Passion for a renewed humanity in Christ**

**International Forum of Catholic Action
Online, November 27, 2022**

Card. Michael Czerny S.J. - Prefect

I am happy to contribute to the opening of the International Conference of the International Forum of Catholic Action on behalf of the *Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development*. While your gathering takes place online, its ambition and purpose remain palpable, tangible, commendable, full of promise.

In our very wounded world, your work and commitment to the Church are greatly valued. The efforts of your Forum strike a balance between the universal and the local church, as the diverse participants and various topics in this conference show. Moreover, your emphasis on youth participation is most encouraging, as an intergenerational conversation is essential for building and sustaining a strong movement.

Our daily work at the Dicastery is to promote integral human development, inspired by the Gospel and reflecting the teaching of the Church. We try to balance the worldwide and the local, too. Concrete action in response to urgencies is invariably local, and the experiences that feed our ideas about action also arise from local realities. This is why we have recently restructured the Dicastery into three sections, beginning with listening and dialogue, followed by research and reflection, and then communication and restitution. Together – and only together - can we strive for integral human development for individuals, communities, nations

Knowing that “*everything is connected*” (LS 91, 117), we try to avoid isolating issues from one another. You can see right away how health, for example, is related to economy, ecology, migration and security. We begin by listening to the sufferings and challenges at the local level.

I am inspired by the “four words” of co-existence selected to frame your International Forum. Let me reflect on their meaning in the teaching of the Church as well as in the daily work of our Dicastery.

Our all being siblings (fraternity) means respecting the other and listening with an open heart. This requires you and me to be open to authentic encounter, for we believe, as St John says, that “*Those who do not love a sibling whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen*” (1 Jn 4:20). Interdependence and interconnection are part of nature, so nature too is inseparable from our all being siblings. We are responsible for each other and for our common home; each is responsible to oneself, to one another, and to God. If these relationships and responsibilities are neglected, then life itself becomes endangered.

Through **dialogue**, we patiently seek truth; we keep on creating common ground; and we exchange to enrich each other's viewpoint and culture. As Pope Francis writes in *Fratelli Tutti*, "*persistent and courageous dialogue does not make headlines, but quietly helps the world to live much better than we imagine*" (FT198). Listening and dialogue are the first step in promoting integral human development at the Dicastery by facilitating a two-way bridge with the local Church. This has been important for our work for migrants and refugees, where we listen to the local Church and to those involved, to grasp the needs, challenges, and responses of people at risk, and foster collaboration.

Peace requires accepting and integrating differences to pursue goals that benefit everyone. Seeking peace is an enduring commitment built upon hope. Lasting peace comes not only through institutional or economic arrangements, but mainly through people's living authentically every day. The Church treats peace as far more than the absence of war. Real peace requires economic and social justice among peoples, as well as equitable access to resources and opportunities. Peace is intertwined with care for the local environment and worldwide ecology in order to rebuild an intentional harmony with creation, a capacity for wonder, and a deeper understanding of life.

Finally, besides our all being siblings, the sub-title of *Fratelli tutti* proposes **social friendship**. It is a way of relating to others that transcends borders, cultures, religious beliefs and even self-interests. By acknowledging the inherent dignity of every human person, the principle of social friendship "*makes true universal openness possible*" (FT 99). This extraordinary relationship serves to nurture our many links with all of creation, united together in bonds of affection (FT 11) and responsibility.

Note the linkage between the subtitles of the Holy Father's two great encyclicals addressed to the entire world. Planetary survival requires **care for our common home**, and our all being **siblings** and **social friendship** within that common home are essential for the urgently-needed care to happen.

To conclude, I truly believe that through ongoing, tireless **dialogue**, based on our **all being siblings** and our growing **social friendship**, we can promote real integral human development and, therefore, longstanding **peace**. This is a top priority for our Dicastery and your International Forum for Catholic Action.

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