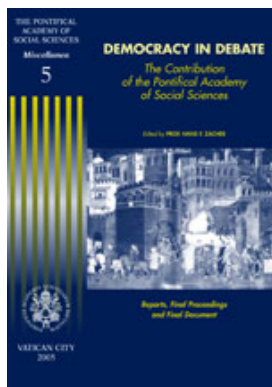




Democracy in Debate, Reports



Final Proceedings and Final Document

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In his 1994 Apostolic Letter establishing the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Pope John Paul II celebrated the remarkable flourishing of Catholic social thought in the century following Pope Leo XIII's path-breaking 1891 Encyclical on labor questions, *Rerum Novarum*. He wrote that, "Over the last century the Church has strengthened her 'citizenship status' by perfecting her social doctrine ... [in] close collaboration, on the one hand, with Catholic social movements, and on the other, with experts in the social sciences". He recalled how Pope John XXIII had stressed, in *Pacem in Terris* and *Mater et Magistra*, that the social doctrine must always strive to take into account 'the true state of affairs' by maintaining a constant dialogue with the social sciences.

Then, citing 'the great tasks the future has in store', John Paul II said the time had now come to give 'new expression' to this long-standing interdisciplinary dialogue. Accordingly, he founded the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, alongside the four-hundred-year-old Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

The new Academy was charged with a double task. In the first place, it is committed to the pursuit of knowledge, with the duty 'of promoting the study and progress of the social sciences, primarily economics, sociology, law and political science'. In addition, its statutes provide that the Academy, through an appropriate dialogue, thus offers the Church the elements which she can use in the development of her social doctrine, and reflects on the application of that doctrine in contemporary society.

In accordance with its obligation to provide the Church with useful material for the development of her social doctrine, the Academy has concentrated in its first ten years on areas where new developments are posing particularly complex challenges for policy makers, for the social sciences, and for Catholic social thought. The subjects selected were: The Study of the Tension Between Human Equality and Social Inequalities from the Perspective of the Various Social Sciences, The Future of Labour, Democracy, Globalization and Intergenerational Solidarity.

The Academy's initial *Democracy* project, carried out from its inception under the leadership of Professor Dr. Hans F. Zacher, has now reached its final phase. As in each of the other areas under study, the Academy commenced its work on democracy by holding workshops and plenary meetings where papers by members and invited experts were presented and discussed. As this process went forward, it became evident that in order to meet its responsibility of providing the Church with the best possible information and the most promising ideas, the Academy could not limit itself to conducting and publishing academic lectures and debates. Thus, upon the completion of several meetings devoted to various aspects of democracy, the entire harvest of material was submitted for evaluation and review to external experts who were requested to report to the Academy and to discuss their findings with the members of the Academy. Once that review was completed, the final step was the preparation of a report, summarizing what could be regarded as results, that is, the elements of knowledge which the Academy could establish by means of the social sciences and which might be useful to the Church in the development of her social teaching. That document was submitted by Professor Zacher to the Academicians for comment, and received final approval at the Academy's May 2004 Plenary Meeting.

With the publication of this Report, together with all the preceding reports and discussions on democracy, the Academy's initial democracy project is complete.

Mary Ann Glendon
President
October 2004