

**Fourth Lenten Conference at the Heart of Mary Shrine, Carvalhos, Pedroso Vila Nova de Gaia -
March 19, 2023**

"Francis' Economy"

Diana Salgado and Diego Nunes

On March 19, the fourth Lenten Conference was held in the Claret Auditorium of the Coração de Maria Sanctuary. The speakers were Diana Salgado and Diego Nunes, two young people who are part of a worldwide movement, headed by the younger generation, commonly known as "Francis' Economy. Before an audience of over one hundred people, these young people described the great challenge "Francis' Economy", which is configured as the development of a process to change the world economy.

At the beginning of their talk, Diana and Diego introduced themselves, explaining that, although they had some training in Economics, their professional areas were different: Diana was involved in teaching and caring for handicapped children; Diego developed activities in the area of innovation and management. Both declared themselves Catholic and linked to Church Movements.

Diego Nunes took the floor to briefly explain what Francis' Economy is. He indicated that the definition refers to the management of the planet's resources and then referred to the Greek etymology of the word "economy": Oikos, which means "House" and Nomos, which refers to "Law". He also explained that the name "Francis" refers to the incorporation of the principles of St. Francis of Assisi into the economy.

Following this introduction, Diego presented the historical framework that led to the emergence of the "Economy of Francis" (EoF) movement. He highlighted some documents of Pope Francis that were foundational, such as the apostolic exhortation "Evangelii Gaudium" of 2013, the encyclical "Laudato Si" of 2015, the message of 19 November 2017 for the First World Day of the Poor, the Invitation Letter of 1 May 2019 for the "Economy of Francis" event and the encyclical "Fratelli Tutti" of 2020. He explained that the entire doctrinal structure of "Francis' Economy" is aligned with the Social Doctrine of the Church and the hallmarks of Pope Francis' pontificate and its central element is the integral development of the human person, that is, it is an economy of integral development. In this regard, he highlighted paragraph 38 of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, which emphasises that salvation is for all men and for the whole man, that is, in all his dimensions: personal and social, spiritual and corporeal, historical and transcendent, because God looks at us as we truly are, in the totality of our being. He also pointed out the end of paragraph 48, which reads: "Any totalitarian vision of society and the State and any purely intramundane ideology of progress are contrary to the integral truth of the human person and to God's plan in history". Thus, he fixed Francis' economy outside pure individualism and impersonal collectivism. More specifically, the speaker densified the substance of Francis' Economy by referring to key ideas of the documents that structured its genesis. He began with three ideas taken from the apostolic exhortation "Evangelii Gaudium": a Church going forth; the problem of social inequality and social exclusion; the idolatry of money, which governs rather than serves. He added three ideas from the encyclical "Laudato Si": its addressee is every person who inhabits the planet and not only the Church; it focuses on an integral ecology; it pronounces itself on the contraposition between domination and responsibility. The speaker explored the meaning of integral ecology, highlighting its scope, which is not reduced to the

biological component, but embraces the whole social and spiritual reality of the person, particularly because environmental problems have their roots in the moral deviation of the human person. Hence, he concluded with Pope Francis that it will not be possible to repair the world without first repairing one's own house. Regarding domination vs. responsibility, he explained that there is a dominant attitude of people that translates into domination: "if I worked, I bought, I can do whatever I want with the goods, they are mine". Francis' Economy is based on another paradigm: "God has allowed me the grace of possessing goods, I must use them with responsibility and this begins in the act of purchase, in the choices, because the good may have been produced with disrespect for the environment, with the use of child labour". In this regard, Diego Nunes recalled that God gave the garden of Paradise to Adam so that he could manage it responsibly. He inferred from this biblical image that Francis' Economy leads us to question what we do with our talents, since we are called to be responsible stewards of Creation.

Regarding Pope Francis' Invitation Letter of May 1, 2019, which called young people, academics, entrepreneurs, workers and people with various social roles to a meeting to be held between March 26 and 28, 2020, to begin the process of reflection on a new vision of the economy, the speaker indicated that the Francis' Economy movement turned out to be a response to the Pope's call: "Your universities, your businesses, your organisations are seedbeds of hope to build other ways of understanding the economy and progress, to combat the throwaway culture, to give a voice to those who do not have one, to propose new lifestyles. ". He also clarified that it is a response with many questions, that is, it is an ongoing process, with many initiatives and formation; it is a "Follow me", as Jesus said to the disciples, and the vocation (and the answers) are discovered as we journey.

Diana Salgado then took the floor, explaining that unfortunately with the advent of COVID 19, the face-to-face meeting planned by the Pope for 2020 was not possible, but the work continued in a non-presential way. She described how the more than 5000 people convened from all over the world were organised: they were divided by themes (12 "villages", each dedicated to a theme) and by axes ("Hubs") and developed many initiatives, inspired by the diversity of life, experiences and formation of the teams of participants. Diana mentioned several ongoing projects and initiatives which include research grants for young people within the scope of the topics covered, classes and interviews made available online by the distinguished 'senior' members (these members include prominent names specialising in the topics covered by Francis' Economics, such as Nobel Prize winner Amartyan Sen and other figures: Gael Giraud, Helen Alford, Jeffrey Sachs, Kate Raworth, Luigino Bruni, Leonardo Bechetti, Vandana Shiva and Wilson Groh). She also mentioned the development of internet podcasts, news channels, initiatives focused on specific territories, such as the provision of computer resources in deprived areas or the development of fair and sustainable agriculture. The speaker also indicated that the Movement has a growing intervention in the great world conferences on the environment, in the media, in academic circles and, in general, in civil society in more and more countries, giving voice and action to Francis' Economy. He went on to describe some initiatives in Portugal and mentioned that finally, between 22 and 24 September 2022, the meeting "Francis' Economy" took place in Assisi.

At the end of the conference both shared how good it was to be at this meeting, highlighting some striking elements, both at the level of learning from the conferences and debates - for example: that one cannot discuss ethics and morality without God, given that both were consolidated on the basis of religious values and traditions; that integral human development cannot be done without a universal fraternity; the need to constitute a "spiritual capital",

because the human being cannot survive without "consuming" meaning for life -, as well as on the level of the concrete experience of living with cultural and talent diversity and witnessing touching initiatives such as the request for forgiveness to the Pope from convicted young offenders, or the appeals from young Ukrainians.

As a final epilogue, they shared that at the end of the Francis' Economy Meeting, all the participants signed a pact, where they assumed individually and together "spending" life so that the economy may become a "different economy, which makes life possible and does not kill, includes and does not exclude, humanises and does not dehumanise, cares for creation and does not devastate it", quoting the words of Pope Francis in the Letter of Invitation. They ended with a challenge to more young people and adults to join the project/process "Francis' Economy".

José Manuel Cruz