

Reconsidering the Common Good

16 February 2026

Address to participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life

Pope Leo XIV

16 February 2026

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Peace be with you.

Good morning to all of you and welcome!

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Members of the Academy, Dear brothers and sisters,

It is a pleasure for me to meet with you for the first time, together with your new President, Monsignor Renzo Pegoraro. I would like to thank you for your scientific research placed at the service of human life and for the work undertaken by the Pontifical Academy.

I greatly appreciate the theme you have selected for this year's meeting: Healthcare for All. Sustainability and Equity. This topic is very important, both for its relevance and for its symbolic meaning. Indeed, in a world scarred by conflicts, which consume enormous economic, technological and organizational resources in the production of arms and other types of military equipment, it has never been more important to dedicate time, people and expertise to safeguarding life and health. In regard to the latter, Pope Francis affirmed that it "is not a consumer good, but a universal right which means that access to healthcare services cannot be a privilege" (Address to "Doctors with Africa - CUAMM," 7 May 2016). I therefore thank you for choosing this theme.

The first aspect that I wish to emphasize is the connection between the health of all and that of each individual. Covid-19, the pandemic, demonstrated this, even harshly at times. Indeed, it has become clear how much reciprocity and interdependence underpin our health and our very lives. Studying this interdependence requires dialogue between different fields of knowledge: medicine, politics, ethics, management and others. It is like a mosaic, whose success depends on both the choice of tiles and their combination. In fact, in matters regarding healthcare systems and public health, it is a question, on the one hand, of understanding the phenomena and, on the other, of identifying specific political, social and technological actions that affect family, work, the environment and society as a whole. Our responsibility lies, therefore, not only in taking measures to treat diseases and ensure equitable access to healthcare, but also in recognizing how health is influenced and promoted by a combination of factors, which need to be examined and confronted in their complexity.

In this regard, I would like to reiterate that we must focus not "on immediate profit, but on what will be best for everyone, knowing how to be patient, generous and supportive, creating bonds and building bridges, working in networks, optimizing resources, so that everyone can feel they are protagonists and beneficiaries of the common work" (Address to the participants in the Seminar "On Ethics and Business Administration in the Healthcare Sector", 17 November 2025).

Here we come to the theme of prevention, which also involves a broad perspective, for the situations in which communities find themselves are the result of social and environmental policies, and have an impact on the health and life of the person. When we look at life expectancy and the quality of health in different countries and social groups, we discover enormous inequalities. These depend upon variables such as income level, the level of education attained and the neighborhood in which one lives. Sadly, today we are also faced with wars that impact civilian structures, including hospitals, which constitute the most grave attacks that human hands can make against life and public health. It is often said that life and health are equally fundamental values for all, but this statement is hypocritical if, at the same time, we ignore the structural causes and policies that determine inequalities. In reality, despite declarations and statements to the contrary, all lives are not equally respected and health is neither protected nor promoted in the same way for everyone.

The concept of One health can help us as a basis for a global, multidisciplinary and integrated approach to health issues. It emphasizes the environmental dimension and the interdependence of the various forms of life and ecological factors that enable their balanced development. Therefore, it is important to grow in the awareness that human life is incomprehensible and unsustainable without other creatures. Indeed, to quote the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, "all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect" (No. 89). This approach is very much in line with the global bioethics that your Academy has repeatedly taken an interest in and which you do well to continue to cultivate.

Understood in terms of public action, One health calls for the integration of health considerations into all policies (transportation, housing, agriculture, employment, education, and so on), since questions of health touch upon every aspect of life. Thus, we need to strengthen our understanding and promotion of the common good, so that it is not violated under the pressure of specific individual or national interests.

The common good — one of the fundamental principles of the Church’s social teaching — risks remaining an abstract and irrelevant notion if we do not recognize that it is rooted in the fostering of close relationships between people and bonds between members of society. This is the ground upon which a democratic culture can grow, one that encourages participation and is capable of uniting efficiency, solidarity and justice. We need to rediscover the fundamental attitude of care as support and closeness to others, not only because someone is in need or is sick, but because they experience vulnerability, the vulnerability that is common to all human beings. Only in this way will we be able to develop more effective and sustainable healthcare systems, capable of satisfying every health need in a world of limited resources as well as restoring trust in medicine and healthcare professionals, notwithstanding any misinformation or skepticism regarding science.

Given the global importance of this question, I reiterate the need to find effective means of strengthening international and multilateral relationships, so that they can “can regain the strength needed for undertaking its role of encounter and mediation. This is indeed necessary for preventing conflicts, and for ensuring that no one is tempted to prevail over others with the mindset of force, whether verbal, physical or military” (Address to Members of the Diplomatic Corps, 9 January 2026). This vision also applies to the cooperation and coordination carried out by supranational organizations engaged in the protection and the promotion of health.

And so, my friends, I conclude by expressing my hope that your commitment will bear effective witness to mutual care, which expresses the way God treats us, because he cares for all his children. I cordially bless each one of you, your loved ones and the work you do. Thank you.

Let us pray together

Our Father...

The Lord be with you ...