



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ITALIAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR BIOSECURITY,
BIOTECHNOLOGIES AND LIFE SCIENCES**

*Hall of the Popes
Monday, 10 April 2017*

[Multimedia]

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I cordially welcome each of you and I thank the President, Professor Andrea Lenzi, for the courteous words with which he introduced our meeting. I would like, first of all, to express appreciation for the work done by the National Committee for Biosecurity, Biotechnologies and Life Sciences in the 25 years since its institution at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. The themes and issues that your Committee addresses are of great importance for contemporary man, both as an individual and in the relational and social dimension, beginning with the family and extending to local, national and international communities, and to the care of creation.

As we read in the Book of Genesis, “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (2:15). Cultivation, of which you are distinguished representatives in the field of Life Sciences and technologies, entails the idea of “*tilling*”. It clearly expresses the effort to make grow, flower and bear fruit, through human ingenuity, what God placed in the world. However, we cannot forget that the biblical text also invites us to “*keep*” (safeguard) the garden of the world. As I wrote in the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, while “*tilling*” refers to cultivating, ploughing or working the earth, “*keeping*” means caring for, protecting, overseeing and preserving it. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature” (cf. n. 67). Your task is not only that of promoting the harmonious and integral development of scientific research and technology regarding the biological processes of plant, animal and human life; you are also asked to foresee and prevent the negative consequences which may result from a distorted use of knowledge and from the ability to manipulate life.

Scientists, like technologists, are called to “know” and to “know how to do”, with increasing

precision and creativity in their respective fields of competence, and at the same time, to make responsible decisions about which steps to take and which not to take so as to choose a different route. The *principle of responsibility* is an unavoidable cornerstone of the actions of man, who must answer — to himself, to others and ultimately to God — for his own actions and omissions. Technology, even more than science, places enormous and increasing power in the hands of mankind. The grave risk is that citizens and sometimes even those who represent and govern them, do not fully perceive the serious nature of the challenges that arise, the complexity of the problems to be solved, and the danger of misusing the power that the Life Sciences and technologies put in our hands (cf. Romano Guardini, *La fine dell'epoca moderna*, Brescia 1987, pp. 80-81).

When technological power and economic power become more tightly intertwined, interests can condition lifestyles and social orientations in the direction of profit for certain industrial and commercial groups, to the detriment of peoples and of the poorest nations. It is not easy to reach a harmonious balance between the different scientific, productive, ethical, social, economic and political demands and to promote sustainable development that respects the “common home”. Achieving such a harmonious balance calls for humility, courage and readiness to compare the different circumstances, in the certainty that the testimony of scientists to truth and the common good contributes to the maturation of civil conscience.

At the conclusion of this reflection, allow me to remind you that science and technology are made for mankind and for the world, not mankind and the world for science and technology. May they be at the service of a dignified and healthy life for all, in the present and in the future, and may they make our common home more liveable and supportive, better looked after and protected. Lastly, I encourage your Committee to launch and sustain the processes of consensus among scientists, technologists, business people and representatives of Institutions, and to identify strategies to raise public awareness regarding issues arising from developments in life sciences and biotechnologies.

May the Lord bless each of you, your families and your valuable work. I assure you that I will remember you in my prayers and I trust that you will do the same for me. Thank you!