



3rd Conference on Ethics in Business: 'Putting Corporate Social Responsibility into Practice'

WE NEED TO CARE FOR OUR COMMUNITY,
OUR RELATIONSHIPS, THE PLACES WE
INHABIT

Sacred Heart Seminary

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Dear all thank you and welcome. The reflection on the conference started from a practical perspective. In our relationship with organisations active in the social sector in Gozo in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic we could not help but notice the difficulties they were facing. **The COVID-19 pandemic has meant physical separation, but that physical separation has also meant that we have retracted to our comfort zone.** While noting that we are all connected, and that is something highlighted specifically by Pope Francis, the COVID-19 pandemic also stopped abruptly that important physical connectedness which distinguished our relationships. **And when that happens we lose awareness.** It happened to the community, and it happened to businesses. This conference has as its objective to stop and reflect. And that is what we are going to do today.

In thinking about my intervention I reflected on the message of Pope Francis to the youth gathered this year, for the annual meeting of "The Economy of Francesco". In his message he reflected on the roots of the word economy which comes from the word 'oikonomos', with 'oikos' meaning 'house', and 'nemein' meaning 'manage'. In fact in highlighting the path of the new economy Pope Francis makes reference to the economy of the land, based on the roots of the word economy, and he says that:

The economy of the land comes from the first meaning of the word economy, that of caring for the home. Home is not only the physical place where we live, but it is our community, our relationships. It is the cities we inhabit, our roots. By extension, home is the whole world, the only one we have, entrusted to all of us (2023, p. 3)

This means that as businesses we need to care for our community, our relationships, the places we inhabit. This is what Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) should be about. It should be about businesses feeling responsible for the communities they are in, and how their actions impact in one way or the other the communities in which they are operating. So why this conference? **As businesses and important actors within society, our responsibility within the community is greater, and this should be acknowledged.**

Real solidarity and a sense of responsibility should underline all the businesses' actions. In the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) Pope John Paul II, in highlighting how we are dependent on each other, and how this value should guide our actions in a positive manner said that:

When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a "virtue," is solidarity. This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, **because we are all really responsible for all.** This determination is based on the solid conviction that what is hindering full development is that desire for profit and that thirst for power already mentioned. (38)

In a conference on 'Ethics and Business', in 1989 Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini then archbishop of Milan had highlighted that though we can never move towards a perfect situation, we can help people be more conscientious and aware of the implications of their actions, leading them to make more responsible choices (1990). **The journey we embarked on as a Chamber in the past three years had as its intent that of making our business community more conscientious of its choices, and their implications.** We hope that we have at least raised more awareness on the importance of acting in a conscientious and ethical manner.

Let me conclude by thanking all the speakers that will be making their intervention today: Marisa Xuereb, Dr Gordon Cordina, Godfrey Swain, and Paul Curmi, and for bearing with me when tying up all the organisational aspects. I would also like to thank Fiorella Pace for accepting to moderate this event, and to Francesco Pio Attard for his help throughout the whole organisation. I would also like to thank the staff at the Chamber, and all of you of goodwill, whose presence here is surely a sign of commitment to this important subject.

Bibliography

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