

Cardinal Stanisław Ryłko
President
Pontifical Council for the Laity
Vatican City

28TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY

“A dicastery for the laity: past and future ...”

Rome, 16-18 June 2016

WELCOME ADDRESS TO THE HOLY FATHER

Holy Father,

The members and consultors of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, who have come together here in Rome for the 28th Plenary Assembly of the dicastery, wish to express their heartfelt gratitude for the gift of this audience and to convey their affection and filial devotion.

Our Plenary Assembly has a special characteristic this time because it is bringing to a close a long and fruitful stage in the history of this dicastery. As part of the reform of the Roman Curia, being led by you Holy Father, on 1 September next, the Council will cease to exist as it is presently structured to make way for a new dicastery with extended jurisdiction. In addition to laity, it will also include family and life.

The theme guiding the discussions at this Assembly is the following: “*A dicastery for the laity: past and future ...*”. We wanted to look back over the history of this Council – not without deep emotion – and to thank the Lord for the fifty years of service given to the great cause of the laity in the Church. This dicastery was established by the explicit will of the Vatican Council Fathers, and it has witnessed the abundant fruits that the Second Vatican Council teaching on the laity has generated in the lives of huge numbers of men and women, adults and young people of our time. We think of the many lay faithful who discovered the beauty of their vocation and mission that stem from Baptism, and the “new era of group endeavours”, one of the most precious fruits of the Council, which saw the amazing flourishing of ecclesial movements and new communities. Saint John Paul II did not hesitate to call them “the gift of the Spirit and a sign of hope for the Church”.

Of course, throughout this long journey of the Catholic laity there has been no shortage of challenges and errors of various kinds that you, Holy Father, recently spoke of in a very incisive way. You urged us to reflect on what to do so that the clock that has marked the “hour of the laity” in the Church will not stop. I believe that this is precisely the fundamental concern that should not be abandoned either by the lay faithful or the pastors.

On the occasion of our Assembly, we are remembering with gratitude the people who preceded us in this service to the mission of the laity in the Church. We are convinced that what we are today, as a dicastery, we also owe to the generous efforts of past generations of staff, members and consultors. We remember the first president of the Pontifical Council, the Canadian Cardinal Maurice Roy, and then the Italian Opilio Rossi, Argentina’s Eduardo Francisco Pironio – Servant of God, whose cause of beatification at the diocesan level was concluded recently –, and the American James Francis Stafford.

On several occasions, Holy Father, you explained to us that in our times we are experiencing not only momentous changes, but also a change of era. It is precisely this that makes the difference! As the Church listens with attention and docility to the voice of the Spirit, we must therefore urgently seek ever new ways to carry out the mission of the Church in a changing world. *Ecclesia semper reformanda* as an old adage says ... The Church, therefore, is always going forth, always moving and never stops! The reform of the Roman Curia that you, Holy Father, are pursuing with so much effort and *parrhesia*, enters within this general ecclesiological framework. We all want to say to you that, in this task of Pastor of the universal Church, you can count on each and every one of us and our prayerful support!

Holy Father, as we now listen to what you will say to us, we ask for your blessing for all of us at this important time of transition that is opening a new stage in our service to the mission of the Church close to the Successor of Peter.

We assure you of our prayers! Bless the members and consultors who are present here, cardinals, bishops, priests and many lay people, and bless their families and all their loved ones!

Thank you, Holy Father.