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SUSTAINABLE BUSINESSES
in the Light of
CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

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I greet you in the name of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. For nearly 50 years, the Pontifical Council has been responsible for promoting and deepening Catholic Social Teaching.¹ Today let us focus on two recent developments: the booklet *Vocation of the Business Leader* which we co-publish with many different partners, and the encyclical *Laudato Si'* to whose formulation and promulgation we contributed.

I am grateful for the opportunity to celebrate the Chinese edition of *Vocation of the Business Leader* published by the Diocesan publishing houses of the diocese Shanghai, Xu Guangqi Press, and Jinde Press, Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province. I hope that this edition will be received as expressing some of the same hopeful dedication to China always shown by Laszlo Ladanyi, S.J. throughout his life (1914-1990).

The *Vocation* handbook or *vademecum* speaks directly to “business leaders” about their responsibilities for others, for the natural world and for their own selves and families. It has attracted an ever-increasing public, in many languages and across many religions.² Believers of various persuasions, agnostics and atheists, all recognize the importance of stressing the moral dimension of business, even though the biblical and Christian sources may not address them directly.³

¹ “The Council will promote justice and peace in the world, in the light of the Gospel and of the social teaching of the Church. It will deepen the social doctrine of the Church and attempt to make it widely known and applied, both by individuals and communities ...” (John Paul II, *Pastor Bonus*, 1988, 142).

² Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Korean, Polish, Portuguese (Brazil), Portuguese (Portugal), Russian, Slovakian, Slovenian, Spanish, Thai and Ukrainian. Available for download at <http://www.iustitiaetpax.va/content/giustiziaepace/en/archivio/pubblicazioni/vocation-of-the-business-leader--a-reflection-.html>

³ For example, Harvard professor Dr. Bob Eccles, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/bobeccles/2016/01/12/why-is-good-governance-important/#251440165143>

Against this background, I thank you for the invitation to speak on “Sustainable Businesses in the light of Catholic Social Teaching”.⁴ The Church is indeed very interested in offering guidance to business in all the dimensions of *sustainability*. The Church does not play the role of a management consultant, however. Rather, we highlight the personal, social and environmental responsibilities of business as a genuine vocation.

I will begin my talk by exploring the issue of “sustainability”, which goes well beyond the survival of the individual commercial enterprise in a competitive market. I will then provide a brief synopsis of *Vocation of the Business Leader* and of the astounding encyclical *Laudato Si'*, followed by the main matter of this talk, a combined reading of the key messages of both these texts. To conclude, may I raise some reflections that our texts may suggest in China.

A. Business and Sustainability

The common sense meaning of “sustainable business” is straightforward. It refers to running a business in such a way that it survives and prospers, against competition and despite shifting demand. Constant evaluation and planning, market research, risk analysis and optimization of supply and distribution are normal elements of making a business sustainable.

This perspective is intentionally limited to the market. Environmental and social costs or damages are regarded as ‘externalities’ that do not appear on the balance sheet, unless somehow forced upon the business by governmental regulation or social agitation.

After World War II, the multinational corporations emerged,⁵ and the rapid pace of globalization in recent decades taught us that global trends touch everyone and everything. Businesses cannot be isolated from social and environmental conditions. The environment spills out beyond national borders; the stakeholders reach well beyond the owners, shareholders, managers and workers to include the consumers, the suppliers, the neighbours, not just now but in future generations too.

Accordingly, the needed contribution of business to an environmentally and socially sustainable world goes beyond “do no harm” or “return it in the state you found it”. It includes the proactive provision of meaningful work for more and more (not fewer and fewer) workers. It includes elimination of damage to the natural environment, so that all species, not only humans, can flourish. It includes the imperative to apply their creativity and ingenuity to invest in sustainability.

The world may not be accustomed to religious leaders questioning business. To question is not to accuse. When Pope Francis addresses the business community, he encourages a broadened sense of vocation, which gives rise to a deepened exercise of responsibility. “Business is a vocation,” he has repeatedly said, “and a noble vocation, provided that those engaged in it see themselves challenged by a greater meaning in life.”⁶ These are scarcely the words of someone who misunderstands or disparages business, as some would allege.

On the contrary, Pope Francis understands and appreciates business in today’s real context. Let me quote four short phrases from *Laudato Si'*: “The present world system is certainly unsustainable from a number of points of view” (LS §61). “We know how unsustainable is the behaviour of those who constantly consume and destroy” (LS §193). “The urgent challenge to protect our common

⁴ „Nachhaltig Wirtschaften – Was heißt das aus Sicht der katholischen Soziallehre?“

⁵ Richard J. Barnet and Ronald E. Muller, *Global Reach: The Power of the Multinational Corporations*, 1973.

⁶ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2013, §203. Cf. *Laudato Si'*, §129.

home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development” (LS §13). “We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity” (LS §159).

With such urgent and well-founded conviction, *Laudato Si’* redefines “sustainability” for business. Businesses can only be sustainable if they treat all the stakeholders and the whole environment in a sustainable way. There are no externalities. There can be no hidden costs. There’s no excuse for wasting, and there’s no place to dump waste. The vocation of business, as the subtitle of *Laudato Si’* would have it, is to serve the common good, which includes caring for our common home.

B. Vocation of a Business Leader: a Guide to True Success

In the spring of 2012, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace brought out its guidebook called *Vocation of the Business Leader* (VBL). It is addressed to executives, managers and owners—to all who make decisions of any scope that shape and carry out the myriad activities we call “business”.

VBL applies the essentials of Catholic Social Teaching to the business world. It arose from reflections on the great social encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*. “Every Christian,” he affirmed, “is called to practice charity in a manner corresponding to his vocation and according to the degree of influence he wields in the *polis*.”⁷

The guidebook aims to help Christian business leaders develop the habit of *discernment, the process of discovering the good and deliberately pursuing it*. In particular, the second part of the volume prepares entrepreneurs to make sound judgments within the complex realities of business by focusing on the twin aspects of **respecting human dignity** and **pursuing the common good**. These are the foundations of the Church’s social teaching.

Being made in the image of God, every human possesses the *dignity* of a person, “who is not just something, but someone”.⁸ People are ends in themselves, not mere instruments to be used by others. Furthermore each aspect of social and economic life finds its fulfilment when it places itself in service of the *common good*—the good of the social and economic body and all its individual members in pursuing their fulfilment as human beings. Thus, as the Pope declared in Bolivia in July 2015, the common good must be the overriding concern of economic policies:

A just economy must create the conditions for everyone to be able to enjoy a childhood without want, to develop their talents when young, to work with full rights during their active years and to enjoy a dignified retirement as they grow older.⁹

In addition to its exposition of Catholic social teaching in the context of business, VBL is a very practical guide. It ends with checklists (examination of conscience) to help business leaders and managers develop in their vocation. Looking outwards, it helps them think about business as a genuine contribution to the common good, not an exercise in self-interest. Looking inwards, they are encouraged to pursue their career in a whole, integrated manner, without separating work from faith and family—an unnatural division that upends so many lives.

C. Humanity’s Vocation to Care for our Common Home

⁷ *Caritas in Veritate*, §7.

⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1992, §357.

⁹ Pope Francis, *Address to the Second World Meeting of Popular Movements*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, 9 July 2015, § 3.1.

The encyclical *Laudato Si'*, which was released in June 2015, teaches that the way we interact with the natural world is deeply related to how we interact with our fellow human beings. In fact, there is no valid way to separate these two aspects. Therefore all decisions about the natural environment are ethical decisions. This is inescapable, and it has important implications.

It is not enough to be a business innovator and a producer of surpluses—these are worthwhile only if they serve integrated, ecological citizenship. And in this era of grave environmental and social crises, Pope Francis asks us to hear and respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. Not only are we grievously damaging our common home, but—in doing so—we are wounding the poor and excluded of the world right now, and eventually our privileged progeny as well. So technology and commerce must be held to transcendental standards of the meaning of life and of the moral outlook. They must be defined by solidarity—both with all people alive today and with those not yet born—and be oriented toward the common good.

The path of the encyclical is detailed and rich. Here are some of its key takeaways:

- All human beings are affected, and everything in nature too, by climate change, misuse of natural resources, waste, pollution and social exclusion.
- Everything is interconnected; we cannot understand the social or natural world or any parts of them in isolation.
- Everyone must act responsibly to save our world—from individuals recycling to enterprises reducing their ecological footprints to world leaders setting and enforcing ambitious carbon reduction targets.
- We must be truthful, not hide or distort facts in order to gain selfish advantage.
- We must engage in dialogue; genuine, trusting and trustworthy engagement of all parties is required to succeed where all is at risk.
- Beyond the industrial age's short-sighted confidence in technology and commerce,¹⁰ we must transcend ourselves in prayer, simplicity and solidarity.

With this brief glimpse at *Laudato Si'*, I turn now to its interplay with VBL.

D. Six Practical Principles for Business

VBL captures the vocation of business in *Six Practical Principles for Business*. They serve as points for review or self-examination and as guidelines for planning. They fit under three broad *business objectives*: to produce Good Goods, to provide Good Work and to achieve Good Wealth. They are three specifications of “good”. They all enhance human dignity and contribute to the common good.

Let us look now at each objective and its two practical principles.

¹⁰ “Short-sighted confidence in technology and commerce” is what Pope Francis sums up under “technocracy” in *Laudato Si'*, cf. §§ 118, 189, 194.

To produce GOOD GOODS

1. **Businesses contribute to the common good** by producing goods that are truly good and services that truly serve. This is the first way that businesses can meet the needs of the world: through the development of goods and services that offer true social value and aid true human flourishing.

The *Vocation* guidebook spells out the ability – and responsibility– to make objective moral judgments about the genuine usefulness of what a business offers or produces.¹¹

Needs ought to be contrasted with mere wants, which might be characterised as those desires that are not essential to human well-being. In extreme cases, satisfying mere wants may even be detrimental to human well-being as, for example, in the sale of non-therapeutic drugs, pornography, gambling, violent video games, and other harmful products. This preoccupation with wants, often called “consumerism,” severs production and consumption from the common good and impedes the development of the person. Goods that are truly good serve the needs of consumers in a hierarchical order; the need for nutritious goods, for example, clearly outweighs the wants of gambling entertainment. This is an objective order, which is why the production of goods and services must abide by truth instead of mere pleasure or utility. (VBL §42)

This concern is echoed by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*. “Since the market tends to promote extreme consumerism in an effort to sell its products,” he says, “people can easily get caught up in a whirlwind of needless buying and spending... When people become self-centred and self-enclosed, their greed increases. The emptier a person’s heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume” (LS §203,204).

Laudato Si' deals with another level of this concern. We must reflect on the true value of technologies themselves, the products and services that they enable, and also on the manner in which technological power is wielded. The encyclical gratefully acknowledges the tremendous contribution of technologies to the improvement of living conditions. Yet it also issues a warning about the misuse of technology, especially when it gives “those with the knowledge, and especially the economic resources to use them, an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world” (LS §104).

It is precisely the mentality of technocratic domination that leads to the destruction of nature and the exploitation of vulnerable people. “The technocratic paradigm also tends to dominate economics and political life” (LS §109), keeping us from recognizing that “by itself the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion” (LS §109). We need a different standard, one in which technological development is guided by moral wisdom.

2. **Businesses maintain solidarity** with the poor by being alert for opportunities to serve deprived and underserved populations and people in need. This is the second way that businesses can meet the needs of the world through the development of goods and services.

In his Davos message, Pope Francis called for this “concern that ought to shape every political and economic decision, but which at times seems to be little more than an afterthought. Those working in these sectors have a precise responsibility towards others, particularly those who are most frail,

¹¹ Pius XI speaks of the importance of businesses “producing really useful goods” for others in *Quadragesimo Anno*, 1931, § 51.

weak and vulnerable...,” for example, hunger in a world of more than sufficient production, or refugees forced to flee but with nowhere secure to settle.

And yet, as the *Vocation* text points out, the real needs of the poor and the vulnerable, including people with special needs, are often overlooked by business. A positive approach is to seek opportunities to serve neglected populations, not only as a proper social responsibility but also as a great business option. At the huge “bottom of the pyramid”, new products and services—such as microenterprises, microcredit, social enterprises and impact investment—have played an important role insofar as they help the poor to develop their own agency. These innovations will not only help people to lift themselves from extreme poverty but also spark their creativity and entrepreneurship and help launch a dynamic of inclusive development (VBL §43). In this spirit, the Pope has urged the social movements to be creative: “You are social poets: creators of work, builders of housing, producers of food, above all for people left behind by the world market.”¹² The Holy Father’s appeal should be heard by business leaders in the world market too.

In *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis speaks with great compassion of how easily the poor are driven from their land when wealthy corporations wish to extract resources; and how they lose access to clean water because of industrial processes and wasteful practices (LS §30). Their “life on this earth is brief and [they] cannot keep on waiting” (LS §162). Can we become as impatient for their needs, as we would be if our own relatives were expropriated or deprived of drinking water?

Pope Francis embraces all people, those living now and those who will come after us. We must accept responsibility for *justice between generations*: “we can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity” (LS §159). His key question for humanity is put in those very terms: “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (LS §160).

To provide GOOD WORK

3. Businesses make a contribution to the community by fostering the special dignity of human work. That is one dimension of the business objective of organising good and productive work.

Laudato Si’ includes a whole section entitled *The need to protect employment* (§124-29). This is no accident, and it highlights the importance of this issue not only for this pontificate, but for the entire social magisterium of the Church. At the heart of the matter is the notion that employment, just like business, is a noble and essential vocation. It is not just about people earning their daily bread, feeding their families, and accessing the basic material conditions needed for flourishing. These are all important, yes, but employment is also much more. In the words of Pope Francis, “work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfilment” (LS §128). Work is how human dignity unfolds in everyday practical life:

Work should be the setting for this rich personal growth, where many aspects of life enter into play: creativity, planning for the future, developing our talents, living out our values, relating to others, giving glory to God. It follows that, in the reality of today’s global society, it is essential that “we continue to prioritize the goal of access to steady employment for everyone,”¹³ no matter the limited interests of business and dubious economic reasoning (LS §127).

¹² Pope Francis, *Address to the Second World Meeting of Popular Movements*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, 9 July 2015, § 3.1.

¹³ *Caritas in Veritate*, §32.

St. John Paul II argued that men and women share by their work in the activity of the Creator.¹⁴ Pope Francis adds that they “become the instrument used by God to bring out the potential which he himself inscribed in things” (LS §124).

It is the duty of business to prioritise this goal of stable and secure employment. As St. John Paul II said, ownership of the means of production is just and legitimate to the extent that it serves useful work.¹⁵ This means that business must always subordinate profits to generating employment — affirming, as he put it, the priority of labour over capital. One example given by Pope Francis is when machines take the place of work. This is often defended on grounds of efficiency and utility. But doing so suggests that human beings are interchangeable with machines as mere factors of production. This denies the dignity of the human person. It is a perfect embodiment of what Pope Francis calls the technocratic paradigm, and its motivation usually boils down to profit.

We should think seriously about the consequences of ever more reliance on machines and robots to make work more ‘efficient’, and about the trend to ‘rationalize’ production and distribution. Clearly, the benefit is profit, but at the cost of less and less decent work. Do individuals thrive from being unemployed or precariously hired? Of course not. Does society benefit from unemployment? Of course not. In fact, we now witness far too many people who cannot find worthwhile and fulfilling work. We should not be surprised when unscrupulous figures with demented fantasies recruit such idle individuals into violence and criminality.

Economics is rooted in the idea of the successful and harmonious household. If we want healthy and harmonious living in our common household, we need to make sure that those who are capable of working can actually find employment. “To stop investing in people, in order to gain greater short-term financial gain, is bad business for society” (LS §128). The creation of jobs is an essential service for the common good. For this reason “it is imperative to an economy which favours productive diversity and business creativity”, and “civil authorities have the right and duty to adopt clear and firm measures in support of small producers and differentiated production” (LS §129).

*4. Businesses that embrace **subsidiarity** provide opportunities for employees to exercise their gifts as they contribute to the mission of the organisation.* Here the business objective of organising good and productive work goes a big step further (VBL §47-50). Managers should allow employees the chance to develop themselves fully in realistic but challenging assignments; with appropriate training and tools and resources; and the full backing of the firm, so that workers learn and grow from experience rather than fearing punishment for any deficiency.

God has exercised subsidiarity by entrusting the earth to humans to keep, till and care for it; this makes human beings co-creators with God. It is up to human beings, to all of us, to **care for our common home**. Owners, business leaders, managers and supervisors should exercise the same subsidiarity and uphold the full human dignity, the integral human development, of those they employ and guide as a sacred trust. Indeed, the good entrepreneur is one who “gives first thought to service and second thought to gain, who [. . .] employs workingmen for the creation of goods of true worth; who does not wrong them by demanding that they take part in the creation of futilities, or even harmful and evil things . . .”¹⁶ The principle of subsidiarity, a mirror of God’s relationship to humanity, requires restraint and a humble acceptance of the role of a servant leader.

¹⁴ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, 1981, §25.

¹⁵ John Paul II, *Centesimus annus*, 1991, §43.

¹⁶ Oswald von Nell-Breuning, *Reorganization of Social Economy*, Milwaukee: Bruce, 1936, pp. 115-116. Quoted in VBL, §42.

To achieve GOOD WEALTH

5. *Businesses model stewardship of the resources—whether capital, human, or environmental—under their control.* The business objective of ‘good wealth’ focuses on generating sustainable wealth and distributing it justly.

For business, the stewardship role centres on adopting sustainable practices in both the narrow and wider senses: to have an enterprise that endures for many years, and to ensure that its activities do not defile the environment and violate human dignity. The problem, Pope Francis notes clearly, is that the logic of competition promotes short-termism, which leads to financial instability and devastation of the environment. “We need to reject a magical conception of the market, which would suggest that problems can be solved simply by an increase in the profits of companies or individuals”, he says (LS §190).

Instead, *Laudato Si’* calls for “the economic and social costs of using up shared environmental resources” to be “recognized with transparency and fully borne by those who incur them, not by other peoples or future generations” (LS §195). Only then can business activities be seen as ethical. This will not happen when short-term profit maximization is seen as the unquestionable goal.

As I mentioned at the beginning, the Holy Father is not anti-business, but he judges profit by a higher criterion. When it comes to the challenges of sustainable development, he calls upon business to lead by harnessing its creativity to solve pressing human needs. And this does not mean forsaking the profit motive. “More diversified and innovative forms of production which impact less on the environment can prove very profitable,” says Pope Francis (§191).

This is especially important in the wake of the Paris Agreement, in which the nations of the world pledged to move away from fossil fuels as soon as possible, with the goal of reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions in the second half of the century. This ambitious goal is what our common home requires—to make sure that our children and those who come after us inherit a habitable planet. Governments can come up with agreements, laws, and regulations, but the implementation falls to many social forces. Business must deploy the financing, re-organization and technology needed to decarbonize the global economy. And I am delighted to note that both China and the United States have announced their decision to sign onto the Paris climate change agreement.

6. *Businesses are just in the allocation of benefits to all stakeholders: employees, customers, investors, suppliers, and the community.* As I mentioned, the business objective of ‘good wealth’ focuses on generating sustainable wealth and distributing it justly.

God is the Creator of all—we can think of the entirety of creation, we can think of all people, we can think of the gift of all goods to all of humanity. Catholic social teaching articulates this as the universal destination of goods. It goes hand in hand with the fundamental principle of the *common good*. The *Vocation* text makes this point clearly:

While property and capital should as a rule be privately held, the right to private property should be “subordinated to the right to common use, to the fact that goods are meant for everyone”.¹⁷ ... Denying people legitimate access to the fruits of the earth, especially the

¹⁷ John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, §14.

means to sustain life, amounts to a negation of God's command to humanity to discover, cultivate and use its gifts (VBL §56).

Pope Francis points out that this is a moral obligation, even a commandment. In Bolivia, he said:

Working for a just distribution of the fruits of the earth and human labour is not mere philanthropy. It is a moral obligation. For Christians, the responsibility is even greater: it is a commandment. It is about giving to the poor and to peoples what is theirs by right. The universal destination of goods is not a figure of speech found in the Church's social teaching. It is a reality prior to private property. Property, especially when it affects natural resources, must always serve the needs of peoples.¹⁸

This, Pope Francis insists, "requires decisions, programmes, mechanisms and processes specifically geared to a better distribution of income, the creation of sources of employment and an integral promotion of the poor which goes beyond a simple welfare mentality."¹⁹

With the Paris Agreement, it is not only generated wealth that should be distributed justly. Justice must also reign over the distribution of the burden of environmental rehabilitation. Those who have contributed most to greenhouse gas emissions and have benefitted most from the industrial period, should now take the lead and contribute more to the solution than those whose standard of living is just beginning to rise (cf. LS §170) As a first step, they must be ever more honest about so-called *externalities* or *spillover effects*, since finally nothing is outside of the accounts of our one shared common household.

E. Reflections concerning China

Let me end by reviewing these ideas with reference to China. In this context, what might we find most fruitful for reflection? In the spirit of Fr. Laszlo Ladanyi, what themes should Christian and other dedicated business leaders in China and elsewhere explore?

China's achievement in raising hundreds of millions of people out of poverty over the course of a few decades is unprecedented in human history. But this transformation has not been painless, for repeated environmental catastrophes in air, soil and water keep on damaging the natural environment and causing many people to suffer. This then is the great challenge of how to sustain economic life, environmentally and socially, in the world's largest nation.

Now as we have seen, the Church's social teaching rests on the twin foundations of **respect for human dignity** and the **pursuit of the common good**. On this most solid basis, then, the *Vocation of the Business Leader* and the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* offer every opportunity for dialogue. Their *care for our common home* includes the alleviation of poverty, the stewardship of natural resources, access to meaningful work, and business as a form of service. In these terms the Church is ready to contribute to improving the ecological situation and encouraging economic development which is beneficial for everyone in society, especially the disadvantaged.

F. Conclusion

¹⁸ Pope Francis, *Address to the Second World Meeting of Popular Movements*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, 9 July 2015, § 3.1

¹⁹ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, § 204.

To conclude: As the *Vocation* booklet says, one role of a business leader is to be a good steward. We would expect to hear this in *Laudato Si'*, yet the word “steward” is used only twice in the encyclical. Instead, Pope Francis talks about *care*, *Sorge*. It is in the title, “Care for our Common Home, *Über die Sorge für das gemeinsame Haus*” and is repeated dozens of times.

Care goes further than stewardship. Good stewards take responsibility and fulfil their obligations to manage and to render an account. But one can be a good steward without feeling connected. If one *cares*, however, one is connected. To *care* is to allow oneself to be affected by another, so much so that one’s path and priorities change. Good parents know this. They care about their children; they care for their children, so much so that parents will sacrifice enormously—even their lives—to ensure the safety and flourishing of their children. With caring, the hard line between self and other softens, blurs, even disappears.

We should think of our relationship with the world and with all people in terms of *caring*. Jesus guides us in this vocation with images from the world of work. He says:

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep (John 10:11-15).

Truly good businesses must exercise a “renewed, profound and broadened sense of responsibility” for the sustainability of our planet and humanity. They will not wait for ‘the market’ to issue orders, but will take the risk of doing what is right because it is right and so change the market for the better.

Caring for our common home requires, as Pope Francis says, not just an economic and technological revolution, but also a cultural and spiritual revolution—a profoundly different way of approaching the relationship between people and the environment, a new way of ordering the global economy. And this places a great responsibility on the shoulders of all leaders—of business, civil society, governments and international institutions.

A week ago, in his Message for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, Pope Francis went so far as to propose “care for our common home” as an eighth work of mercy, with both its spiritual and its corporal dimension. In the Holy Father’s words,

As a spiritual work of mercy, care for our common home calls for a “grateful contemplation of God’s world” (LS §214) which “allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us” (LS § 85). As a corporal work of mercy, care for our common home requires “simple daily gestures which break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness” and “makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world” (LS §230-31).²⁰

I hope that my reflections have stimulated some useful thoughts about exercising that responsibility in business and indeed in every human activity.

²⁰ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2016/documents/papa-francesco_20160901_messaggio-giornata-cura-creato.html