

International Vatican conference
“Unite to Prevent, Unite to Cure”

Exploring Mind, Body & Soul

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From May 6 – 8, 2021, the fifth international Vatican conference, ‘Exploring the Mind, Body & Soul’, brought together online a remarkable cross-section of persons in the communications, technology, research, and healthcare fields, as well as CEOs and policy makers. In an era of lightning-fast changes in technology and evolving understandings in human health, the conference – co-organized by the Cura Foundation, The Science and Faith (STOQ) Foundation, and the Pontifical Council for Culture – aimed to foster dialogue and create a forum for discussion, interviews, talks, and multimedia presentations. Wide-ranging topics included sessions such as: Religion and the Pandemic; Human Enhancement; Neuroscience of Empathy and Compassion; and Investing in Health and Healing Around the World.

CURA founder and STOQ vice president, Dr. Robin Smith, MD, opened the conference by citing the unprecedented, rapid development of a COVID vaccine and acknowledged with gratitude the “extraordinary and historic collaboration among persons in science, medicine, business, government and philanthropy in embarking together on a mission to save the world.” Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture, followed with an introduction to the 2021 conference’s triad theme centered on body, soul, and mind, as those “three stars that light up in the sky – the sometimes-dark sky of our contemporary times, of modernity – and that touch radical, fundamental components of the human figure, of the human person”.

The three-day meeting aimed to foster collaboration through open dialogue and interdisciplinary approaches to global health care, including the conscious effort to bring to the table persons of diverse backgrounds and religions in “advocating for the vulnerable”. Prominent throughout the conference was also the deliberate focus on attempting to ‘translate’ new science and health innovations into accessible language for a wide range of online viewers, and thus inform the public of advances “in finding cures for many intractable diseases and the financial, social, and societal implications of doing so.”

There was wide-spread support for the conference from both the ecclesial and secular realms. On the last day of the conference, in a videotaped message, Pope Francis thanked participants and, noting with pleasure the presence of both Catholic and non-Catholic students from around the world, encouraged all to continue along interdisciplinary pathways “for the sake of a better understanding of ourselves and of our human nature . . . while always keeping in mind the transcendent horizon to which our being tends.”

To view conference session highlights, see: <https://vaticanconference2021.org/highlights/>