



The Holy See

***MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
SIGNED BY CARDINAL ANGELO SODANO
ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD FOOD DAY 1996****

16 October 1996

1. The annual observance of World Food Day provides His Holiness Pope John Paul II with an opportunity to express once more his appreciation to you, Mr. Director-General, to the representatives of the member States of FAO and to all those who with different tasks and responsibilities are involved in the effort to alleviate malnutrition and hunger.

The anniversary of the establishment of FAO invites us to reflect together on one of the most striking paradoxes of our time. While the goals which the human family has achieved encourage us to hope for a future ever more responsive to human needs, the world remains divided between those who live in abundance and those who lack the necessary daily bread. This division has been accentuated by recent events, natural disasters and situations caused by deliberate human action.

2. There is an increased need for more effective action by the international community and its institutions on behalf of all - men, women, families, communities - who live in the poorest areas of the world. In fact, attention to the causes and effects of malnutrition and hunger must never lead us to neglect the necessity of practical action on behalf of those unable to share in the resources and fruits of creation. The response therefore cannot be a continued disregard of the attitude of solidarity required for a more effective intervention.

Recent experience has also heightened humanity's awareness that technical solutions, however elaborate, are not effective if they lack the necessary reference to the central importance of the human person - the beginning and end of the inalienable rights of every individual, community and people. Among these rights there emerges the fundamental right to nutrition, but the actual putting into practice of this right cannot be seen merely as a goal to be striven for. This right, in fact, must

inspire action aimed at promoting a life consistent with the demands of human dignity and free from those external constraints which, under any form, can limit freedom of choice and even compromise the survival of individuals, families and civil communities.

3. It is the hope of His Holiness Pope John Paul II that these brief reflections will help to foster in everyone the conviction that material aid, the modification of habits linked to affluent life-styles and attention to preserving resources and the environment are not enough in the fight against hunger and malnutrition. Also needed is a "choice of life" which, by rediscovering a sense of sharing and by realizing the human dimension of the tragedy of hunger and malnutrition, will be able to overcome special interests, also in the area of international activity. This could be the right direction for efforts aimed at enabling every people and nation to achieve an adequate level of food security.

With these sentiments, the Holy Father invokes upon FAO and its work abundant heavenly blessings, and he renews to you, Mr. Director-General, his cordial best wishes.

Cardinal Angelo Sodano
Secretary of State

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L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n.43 p.7.

Serving the Human Family. The Holy See at the Major United Nations Conferences, New York City: The Path to Peace Foundation, 1997, p. 867-868.