



# The Holy See

---

## **ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE MEMBERS OF "ROTARY INTERNATIONAL"**

*Thursday, 14 June 1979* Dear friends, FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE of my predecessor Paul VI, I am happy to extend a cordial welcome to members of Rotary International. It is a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to continue, on an international level, the conversation which Paul VI inaugurated with you years ago in Milan, and which he later carried on in Rome. I too am very willing to reflect with you on your important aims and on your worthy activities. Your presence here today indicates a great power for good. You come from many different nations and backgrounds. You bring with you vast experience in the economic, industrial, professional, cultural and scientific fields. In the solidarity of your association, you find mutual support, reciprocal encouragement and a shared commitment to work for the common good. To one who observes you with deep interest and keen attention it seems as though you are offering, with sincerity and generosity, your talents, your resources and your energies to the service of man. And to the extent that you pursue this lofty ideal of reaching out to people everywhere, I am certain that you will continue to find satisfaction and human fulfilment. Indeed, in your very act of giving, of assisting, of helping others to help themselves, you will find enrichment for your own lives. In demonstrating ever greater involvement in the cause of man, you will appreciate ever more the unsurpassed dignity and grandeur of man, as well as his real fragility and vulnerability. And in your efforts and endeavours for the good of man you can be assured of the understanding and esteem of the Catholic Church. The Church is a willing ally of all those who promote man's well-being, irrevocably committed as she is to this cause, in virtue of her nature and her mandate. In my Encyclical I emphasized the relationship between the Church's mission and man, when I stated: "Man in the full truth of his existence, of his personal being and also of his community and social being – in the sphere of his own family, in the sphere of society and very diverse contexts, in the sphere of his own nation or people... and in the sphere of the whole of mankind – this man is the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission: he is the primary and fundamental way for the Church, the way traced out by Christ himself..."[1]. Because of this solicitude of the Church for man in his concrete reality, permit me to add a word of particular encouragement for your current programme encompassing your concern for "Health, Hunger, Humanity". It is meant to be your specific means of cooperating in the spiritual and material progress of society, in defending human dignity, in applying principles of upright conduct, and in exemplifying fraternal love. May this programme, so conceived, be a lasting contribution to man on the part of Rotary International. The three words themselves open up extended areas and suggest so much to the ingenuity of your spirit of service. As the modern world succeeds in producing more and more quality medicine, vast numbers of people are still in dire need of basic medical care. Despite magnificent efforts and achievements, the area of preventive medicine remains to a great extent an unfulfilled challenge. The dignity of man requires an attentive and truly knowledgeable care for the sector of mental health – a whole area where we again encounter human fragility and vulnerability, and where earnest

and sustained commitment to the grandeur and dignity of man is so needed. Widespread hunger remains today one of the telling expressions of man's uncompleted quest for progress and for the mastery of creation. Millions of children are crying out to the world, pleading for food. And at the same time millions of people are forced to bear in their bodies and their minds the results of a lack of proper nourishment when they were young. They exhibit before the witness of history the permanent scars of a diminished or severely handicapped physical or mental condition. For all who are willing to see, hunger is so real; at the same time hunger has so many facets. Man is hungry for food, and yet he realizes that he does not live "by bread alone"[2]. Man is also hungry for knowledge of the Creator, the Giver of all good gifts; he hungers for love and truth. The human being hungers to be understood; he craves freedom and justice, and true and lasting peace. Dear Rotarians, is this not an immense area in which you have many opportunities to expend yourselves for your fellowman? And whatever other challenge remains in the quest for human advancement – whether in the area of development or liberation – can be grouped under your third category: humanity – the betterment of humanity. To work for humanity, to serve men and women everywhere, is a splendid aim, especially when the motivation is love. At this point no one will be surprised if, in my reflections, I add a word with special reference to those Rotarians who are linked to me in the Christian faith. Precisely at a moment when he was speaking about the progress of man and the development of peoples, Paul VI proclaimed his conviction, which is mine and that of Christians everywhere: "By reason of his union with Christ, the source of life, man attains to new fulfilment of himself, to a transcendent humanism which gives him his greatest possible perfection: this is the highest goal of personal development"[3]. And it is to this "new fulfilment" and to this "transcendent humanism" that I wish to give witness today, offering them as the complement of all you are doing in your noble and worthy programme of service. Thus looking upon man as "the primary and fundamental way for the Church"[4], I could not but likewise proclaim that "Jesus Christ is the chief way for the Church"[5];. Finally, I would ask you to convey to all the members of Rotary International, to all your colleagues throughout the world, the expression of my esteem for the efforts you are making on behalf of humanity. May your generous service render honour to your respective countries and be reflected in the joy of your daily lives. My special greeting goes to your children and to the elderly at home, and my prayers include the many intentions that you carry in your hearts. May God sustain Rotary International in the noble cause of reaching out to serve humanity – humanity in need.

---

[1] Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Redemptor Hominis*, 14.[2] Cfr. *Deut.* 8, 3; *Matth.* 4, 4.[3] Pauli VI *Populorum Progressio*, 16.[4] Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Redemptor Hominis*, 14.[5] *Ibid* 13. © Copyright 1979 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana