



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
AI MEMBRI DEL CONSIGLIO ESECUTIVO
DELL'ORGANIZZAZIONE MONDIALE DEL TURISMO***

Giovedì, 26 novembre 1992

1. I am happy to welcome the Executive Council of the World Tourism Organization today, having been so hospitably welcomed 10 years ago at its headquarters in Madrid. This meeting gives me the opportunity to tell you once again how much I value its work - as is witnessed to by the presence of the Holy See's Permanent Observer to your organization and by the relations established between your General Secretariat and the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples.

2. The documents published following your Manila and Sofia General Assemblies, as well as the recommendations of the Hague Declaration, clearly show your growing attention to the contributions that tourism can make to human development. As is stipulated in the Tourist Code, for the sake of both present and future generations it is necessary to ensure the protection of the tourist environment, since its human, natural, social and cultural elements mean that it is part of the heritage of all the inhabitants of every country. If the growing economic importance of tourism means that it can constitute a driving force in a people's development, then "a true development, in keeping with the specific needs of the human being... implies... a lively awareness of the value of all and of each person. It likewise implies a lively awareness of the need to respect the right of every individual to the full use of the benefits offered by science and technology" (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 33). This is particularly important in the case of developing countries, which have become new holiday destinations.

3. Tourism is experiencing a great expansion in our times, but must not lose sight of the fact that its essential goal is the human being - a human being more open to the world and better able to relate to other traditions of wisdom or religious thought. In the Encyclical *Centesimus annus* I spoke of the central place of the human being in economic activity, saying: "It is not only a question of raising all peoples to the level currently enjoyed by the richest countries, but rather of building up a more decent life through united labour, of concretely enhancing every individual's dignity and creativity, as well as his capacity to respond to his personal vocation, and thus to God's call" (*Centesimus annus*, n. 29). The opportunity that tourism offers to contemporary men and women is precisely that of creating - through a wise and effective education - the conditions in which "a careful and respectful trip by tourists and open hospitality by hosts can turn simple visits into real encounter" (*Address to the Fourth World Congress for the Pastoral Care of Tourism*). It is therefore most appropriate that

you should have placed the question of training and education on your agenda-training for those who work in the tourism sector, but also education for those who travel.

4. Here I must echo the words of certain Asian Bishops, who have expressed their horror over the degrading practice of sex tourism. Young people, both boys and girls, are being drawn into this industry, which treats them simply as objects. With you, I hear the voices of hundreds of thousands of children who are being abused and robbed of their moral and physical dignity: they ask that they be truly assured the protection that is promised by international agreements and demanded by the human conscience.

5. With you too, I would express the hope that tourism can be rightly guided and directed, and thus serve the harmonious development of nations and lead to the discovery of the gifts that the Creator and Father of all has sown so abundantly in the universe and in the hearts of people of every race, language and culture. For these are the paths of

peace.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n.49 p.7.*

© Copyright 1992 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana