



The Holy See

*Address of His Holiness Paul VI to the 18th Session of the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization**

Friday, 14 November 1975

It is always with special joy that we welcome the members of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. We have a very lively awareness of the importance of the work which brings together political leaders and experts from the whole world, to consider the crucial problems which condition people's lives. This session also coincides with the thirtieth anniversary of FAO; we are happy to renew to this Organization our fervent good wishes and the confident hopes that we went to express in its own headquarters, five years ago.

The idea of an international agricultural adjustment, which is the central theme of this Eighteenth Session, belongs to the insight which presided over the birth of your Organization. The fact that this idea now influences many with the quiet power of an evident need is surely the best compliment which could be paid to the quality of the work already accomplished. And it is surely the best stimulus for yourselves, at a time when repeated dramatic alarms and the awareness of the precariousness of the world food situation and of general economic balance confer upon you a fresh responsibility.

In the space of a short period of time, a whole series of international Conferences at the highest level have stressed the need for more equitable international economic relationships. You have contributed to this new awareness. It is now up to you to develop it, and to help it to result in coherent concrete achievements in your particular sphere. Your statutes and the experience which you have gained put you in a leading position to deal with this task.

In fact, in the course of your present studies you are concerning yourselves directly with the most numerous and too often the most despised and forgotten part of humanity: the rural community, particularly in the Third World. Henceforth, and this may be paradoxical, the elementary economic task that consists in feeding people constitutes a valuable regulator for economic life as a whole. If

puts the accent on the scandal of waste – a scandal whose intolerable nature people are becoming more and more aware of at a time when numberless human beings are dying of hunger; it directs efforts towards the real needs, in places where too often the economy stimulated and diverted by artificial needs; and it invites people to establish new relationships with a view to the true service of man, of every man and of the whole man, in his integral development.

We rejoice sincerely at these new prospects opening up before you. We congratulate you on the work that has already been accomplished. The history of confident relationships which have not ceased to develop between your Organization and the Holy See illustrates in a significant manner the Church's care to recognize with joy and gratitude all service rendered to people, especially in such a basic matter as that of daily bread.

The Church in her turn brings the light and energy of the Gospel to all human activities. Her teaching on the unity of the human family, all the members of which come from God, are created in his image and called to one single end, which is God (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 24), enlightens and strengthens what your experience causes you to discover with ever greater clarity: human problems such as international agricultural adjustment, and, more widely, the establishment of more equitable relationships between nations, can only be solved if they are placed within the framework of the effective solidarity of the whole human family.

This does not mean that a universal framework must be imposed, denying the more individual manifestations of solidarity and seeking to imprison human effort within a single model of development. Universal, living solidarity is built up little by little, starting from the more immediate manifestations of solidarity whereby people and nations develop their personalities in line with their particular creativity, within the environment for which they have more specific responsibility, in the forward movement of a history which enables them to reap the cultural heritage of previous generations and to incorporate it in new constructions. You are in a very special way sensitive to this implantation in a soil and a history: respect for people and the desire for effectiveness come together to demand that peoples should be recognized as having responsibility for their own development, and in the first place an increasing autonomy in food production. But an unflinching effort is needed in order to direct individual groups towards the horizon of wider solidarities, in order to liberate all their energies, or multiply every kind of exchange, to ensure the coherence and effectiveness of everyone's efforts. Agricultural populations will gain by being dynamically inserted into the general movement of economy and civilization.

The "world conceptual framework" of which your documents speak is therefore, first of all, a question of a mental attitude, an interior dynamism in people and nations which widens their horizons and makes them conceive and achieve their objectives in a setting which provides universal solidarity. This movement from within calls for a true conversion of attitudes, and in this the Church is playing her part. But this movement is endowed with fresh energy for development when universal solidarity succeeds in taking flesh in shared institutions, with shared orientations.

You are one of these institutions which already expresses something of the unity of the human family. We trust that the work of your Eighteenth Session will enable you to select orientations capable of bringing about the progress of human solidarity in the common struggle against hunger and for development. This will be your valuable collaboration in the building up of society. Such a building up demands that the quest for more just structures should be rooted in a political desire for peace and brotherhood, both of them being fostered and guided by a firm conviction of the incomparable dignity of the human person; for the human person deserves our tenacious efforts and, when his freedom is respected, reveals a creativity capable of mastering the great problems of our time.

For our part, we offer you, for this great human work, the inexhaustible resources of the Gospel. These resources have developed, during this Holy Year, new powers of reconciliation, rooting Christians ever more firmly in God and giving them a renewed experience of their brotherhood in God – a spiritual experience which is being lived here and which, throughout the world, is preparing men who are better able to place their efforts in the perspective of the unity of the human family reconciled in our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the Church's contribution; this is the meaning of our prayer. We ask the God and Father of all people to assist you in the heavy task which is yours in the service of humanity, in order that the earth may bring forth its fruits in abundance and that these fruits may be available to all.

*ORa n.48 p.4.*Paths to Peace* p.322-323.
