



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE 9th INTERNATIONAL YOUTH FORUM
(Rocca di Papa, 28-31 March 2007)**

*To Archbishop STANISŁAW RYŁKO
President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity*

It gives me great pleasure to send my cordial greeting to you, Venerable Brother, to the Secretary, to those working with the Pontifical Council for the Laity, and to all those who are taking part in the 9th International Youth Forum on the theme “*Witnessing to Christ in the world of work*” that is taking place this week in Rocca di Papa. It is with particular affection that I direct my thoughts to the young delegates from the bishops’ conferences and the international movements, associations and communities that have come from the five continents and who work in very different fields. I extend my respectful greetings to the distinguished speakers who have agreed to contribute to the meeting with their expertise and experience.

The theme is very much a topical issue and takes into account the transformations that have taken place in recent years in the fields of economics, technology and communications, changes that have radically changed the appearance and conditions of the labour market. The progress achieved has, on the one hand, given new hope to young people, but on the other it has created disturbing forms of marginalisation and exploitation with more and more situations of personal hardship. Because of the noticeable difference between the education and training received and the world of work, it is now more difficult for them to find employment that meets with their personal skills and studies, and there is no certainty that they will be able to maintain even unstable employment for any length of time. The process of globalisation taking place in the world entails a need for mobility that obliges numerous young people to emigrate and live far from their home countries and their families. This brings about an unsettling feeling of insecurity that undoubtedly has repercussions on their ability to not only dream and build up a project for the future, but even to commit themselves to matrimony and start a family. These are complex and delicate questions that must be faced in due course, keeping in mind the reality of our times while

referring to the social doctrine of the Church. This is duly presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and especially in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*.

The attention of the Church in recent years has been constantly directed on the social question, and in particular on that of work. We remember the encyclical *Laborem exercens* published a little over twenty-five years ago, on 14 September 1981, by my well loved predecessor John Paul II. This reaffirmed and updated the great intuitions developed by Pope Leo XIII and Pius XI in the encyclicals *Rerum novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo anno* (1931), both written during the period of the industrialisation of Europe. In a context of economic liberalism conditioned by market forces, of competition and competitiveness, these pontifical documents forcefully call on the need to evaluate the human dimension of work and to protect the dignity of the person. In fact, the ultimate reference of every human activity can only be the human person, created in the image and likeness of God. A close analysis of the situation, in fact, shows that work is part of God's plan for humankind and that it is participation in his work of creation and redemption. Every human activity should be an occasion and place for the growth of individuals and society, the development of personal "talents" that should be appreciated and placed at the ordered service of the common good, in a spirit of justice and solidarity. For believers, moreover, the ultimate aim of work is the building up of the Kingdom of God.

While I invite you to treasure the conversations and reflections that take place over the next few days, I hope that this important assembly of young people may be a profitable occasion of spiritual and ecclesial growth for the participants, through the sharing of experiences and personal accounts, and common prayer and liturgies celebrated together. Today, more than ever, it is necessary and urgent to proclaim "the Gospel of Work", to live as Christians in the world of work and become apostles among workers. In order to fulfil this mission it is necessary to remain united to Christ through prayer and a deep sacramental life, and for this purpose, to hold Sunday in special high regard, for it is the day dedicated to the Lord. While I encourage young people not to lose heart when faced with these difficulties, I invite them to participate next Sunday in Saint Peter's Square in the solemn celebration of Palm Sunday and the 22nd World Youth Day, the final stage of preparation for the World Youth Day that will take place in Sydney Australia next year.

The theme for reflection this year is: "*Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another*" (Jn 13:34). Here I repeat what I wrote to young Christians all over the world, that there may be awakened in young Christians, "trust in a love that is true, faithful and strong; a love that generates peace and joy; a love that binds people together and allows them to feel free in respect for one another", and allows them to develop their abilities to the full. It is not simply a question of becoming more "competitive" and "productive", but it is necessary to be "witnesses of charity". It is only in this way that young people - with the support of their respective parishes, movements and communities, in which it is possible to experience the greatness and vitality of the Church - will be able to experience work as a vocation and true mission. To this end, Venerable Brother, I assure you of my prayers, with the heavenly protection of Mary and Saint Joseph, patron of workers, I

send you and all those participating in the International Forum and all young Christian workers, a special Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 28 March 2007

Benedictus PP. XVI

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