



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS FOR WORLD FOOD DAY 2013

To Mr José Graziano da Silva Director General of the FAO

1. World Food Day places us before one of the most serious challenges for humanity: that of the tragic condition in which millions of hungry and malnourished people still live, among them many children. This acquires even greater seriousness in an age like our own, which is characterized by unprecedented progress in many fields of science and by ever greater possibilities of communication.

It is a scandal that there is still hunger and malnutrition in the world! It is not just a question of responding to immediate emergencies, but of addressing together, at all levels, a problem that challenges our personal and social conscience, in order to achieve a just and lasting solution. May no one be obliged to abandon his or her country or own cultural environment due to a lack of essential means of subsistence! Paradoxically, in an age when globalization enables us to know about the situations of need that exist in the world and to multiply exchanges and human relationships, the tendency to individualism and to withdraw into ourselves seems to be on the rise. These tendencies lead to a certain attitude of indifference — at the personal, institutional and State level — toward those who are dying of hunger or suffering from malnutrition, almost as though it were an inevitable fact. However, hunger and malnutrition can never be considered a normal occurrence to which one must become accustomed, as if it were part of the system. Something has to change in ourselves, in our mentality, in our societies. What can we do? I think that an important step is to tear down decisively the barriers of individualism, self withdrawal and the slavery of profit at all costs; and this needs to be accomplished not only in the dynamics of human relations but also in global economic and financial dynamics. Today more than ever, I think it is necessary *to educate ourselves in solidarity*, to rediscover the value and meaning of this very uncomfortable word, which oftentimes has been left aside, and to make it become a basic attitude in decisions made at the political, economic and financial levels, in relationships between persons, peoples and nations. It is only in standing firmly united, by overcoming selfish ways of thinking and

partisan interests, that the objective of eliminating forms of indigence determined by a lack of food will also be achieved. A solidarity that is not reduced to different forms of welfare, but which makes an effort to ensure that an ever greater number of persons are economically independent. Many steps have been taken in different countries, but we are still far from a world where all can live with dignity.

2. The theme chosen by the FAO for this year's celebration is "Sustainable Food Systems for Food Security and Nutrition". I see in it an invitation to rethink and renew our food systems from a perspective of solidarity, by overcoming the logic of an unbridled exploitation of creation and by better orienting our commitment to cultivate and care for the environment and its resources, in order to guarantee food security and progress toward sufficient and healthy food for all. This poses a serious question about the need to substantially modify our lifestyle, including the way we eat which, in so many areas of the planet, is marked by consumerism and the waste and squandering of food. The data provided by FAO indicates that approximately one third of the global production of food is not available due to increasing loss and wastefulness. Eliminating this waste would drastically reduce the number of people suffering from hunger. Our parents taught us to appreciate what we receive and have and to regard it as a precious gift of God.

However, wasting food is only one of the fruits of the "culture of waste" which often leads to sacrificing men and women to the idols of profit and consumption. It is a sad sign of the "globalization of indifference" which slowly leads us to grow "accustomed" to the suffering of others, as though it were normal. The challenge of hunger and malnutrition does not only have an economic or scientific dimension which regards the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the food supply chain; it also and above all has an ethical and anthropological dimension. To educate in solidarity therefore means *to educate ourselves in humanity*: to build a society that is truly human means to put the person and his or her dignity at the centre, always, and never to sell him out to the logic of profit. The human being and his dignity are "pillars on which to build shared regulations and structures that, by overcoming pragmatism or the mere technical data, are capable of eliminating divisions and of narrowing existing gaps" (cf. [Address to Participants in the 38th Session of the FAO, 20 June 2013](#)).

3. The International Year that through the FAO's initiative will be dedicated to the rural family is just around the corner. This event offers me the opportunity to propose a third element for reflection: education in solidarity and in a way of life that overcomes the "culture of waste" and truly places each person and his or her dignity at the centre, beginning with the family. It is from this first formative community that we learn to take care of others, for the good of the other and to love the harmony of creation and to share and enjoy its fruits, by fostering reasonable, balanced and sustainable consumption. *To support and protect the family* so that it educates in solidarity and respect, is a decisive step in moving towards a more equitable and humane society.

The Catholic Church travels with you along these paths, aware that charity, that love is the soul of

her mission. May today's celebration not be a mere annual commemoration but rather a true opportunity to bring ourselves and institutions to act according to a culture of encounter and solidarity, in order to provide adequate responses to the problem of hunger and malnutrition, as well as to other problems that affect the dignity of every human being.

In offering my cordial best wishes, Mr Director General, may the FAO's work be ever more effective, I invoke upon you and upon all those who collaborate in this fundamental mission the Blessing of Almighty God.

From the Vatican, 16 October 2013

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