



# The Holy See

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## *MESSAGE TO THE III WORLD FOOD DAY\**

The Third World Food Day, for which credit belongs to the Food and Agriculture Organization, takes on an importance which should not escape anyone living on this planet. It touches a crucial problem and one which causes divisions among social classes, countries and vast regions of the world. Humanity is becoming more aware of this problem and it is the Church's perpetual concern to offer its contribution to its resolution. This is why, in conformity with the specific mission that falls to me on the plane of ethical teaching and of promoting the work of peacemaking, I am anxious to launch an appeal to the Governments and to the peoples of all the continents - a new appeal to solidarity, which is especially appropriate within the framework of this Jubilee Year of the Redemption when the Church is extending an invitation to reconciliation with God and among men.

The Representatives of the Governments and of the various worldwide Organizations which are specialists in this problem are well aware that this sad phenomenon of poverty and hunger of numerous peoples of the globe is not, alas, a thing of the past. To be sure, natural calamities play their part in this tragedy. But we are surely obliged to acknowledge that men themselves contribute to the aggravation of socio-economic injustices which often result from ideological and political systems, or through the outbreak of war or of guerrilla activity.

The statistics furnished by the specialized Agencies show that in the course of the last decade, the rate of world food supply has been adequate in a global sense, thanks to the increase of food production which has more than kept pace with that of the population. And discoveries, some of which have occurred recently, allow us to look to the future with confidence, while not losing sight of the foreseen population increases.

This having been said, it remains a fact that millions of human beings continue to suffer from hunger and even see their situation worsen, notably in Asia, Africa and Latin America: The extremely disturbing question then is that of the imbalances and shortages of food that exist in regions of the world particularly marked by a continuous diminution of available food supplies in

the face of rapidly increasing population. Moreover, these truly unfavoured countries seem destined to an ever increasing dependence vis-à-vis the developed nations at the level of imports of farm-food produce. In this I see one of the great scandals of our era. It is indeed a situation of violence inflicted on human populations. And there can be no question of surmounting this situation through other forms of violence against life, but only through the accelerated establishment of an international economic order, truly more just and more fraternal, both on the level of production and on that of the distribution of foods.

This order requires not only an equitable distribution of the resources necessary to the life and often to the survival of peoples in misery, thanks for example to the gift of surplus foods on the part of wealthy nations, but a much more effective recourse to all the factors contributing to the concrete self development of each nation: that is to say, adequate tools and above all investments and loans- under conditions suitable for poor countries.

To sum up, it is the whole economic system of the entire world that must be remodelled. What is needed is an international economic system that gives moral priority to the development of every country and of every human person.

Obviously, it is all the countries that are most advanced in their development and their Governments which are the first called upon by the urgency of such international solidarity, and which have to gear their activity harmoniously with the international Organizations dependent on UNO, as also with the Agencies that specialize in the areas of agriculture, food supply, finance and commerce. It is likewise necessary to point out that the non-governmental Organizations that arise from generous and autonomous initiatives have their place as well, often even an invaluable one. But in order to be fully effective, these organizations need to coordinate their activity with the official organisms.

The Christian people, for their part, would be unfaithful to the example and teaching of their Founder were they not to bring all their solicitude to their duties of solidarity with those who suffer from undernourishment. Chapter 25 of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew is revolutionary for anyone who reads it with calm objectivity and sincerity. Jesus Christ identifies himself in some way with the least of his brothers who would be able to say: "I was hungry." In every era, Christian communities have endeavoured to live at the service of the poor, of the starving! And often enough in an admirable manner! The honours list of saints and of institutions that came into existence for the relief of human misery would be interminable. I shall take the liberty merely to point out that the Holy See, through its Representative with FAO, was among the first to subscribe to and to launch the "Manifesto" of 14 May 1963 which proclaimed the right of man to eat to satisfy his hunger, and the socio-charitable Organizations of the Church were among the most eager to respond to the appeal of 16 October 1965 for the mobilization of youth in a united front against hunger.

In this year, dedicated in the whole world to the solemn commemoration of the event of the Redemption, I have never cease to exhort the disciples of Christ to become reconciled to God but also to rediscover in a profound way the love of their fellow men, be they near or far away; and especially when they are weighed down by intolerable conditions of life, among which should be numbered undernourishment and hunger. I extend my appeal, beyond the faithful, to all men of good will to work for reconciliation among social classes and among the peoples of the whole world, and to participate very actively in the ever more clearly programmed and more resolute establishment of justice for all, of dignity for all, of happiness for all, thanks to an intense and concerted struggle against misery and hunger on our earth.

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*Paths to Peace p. 329-330.*

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