



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO REPRESENTATIVES OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER
INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES VISITING ROME
FOR THE WORLD SUMMIT ON NUTRITION***

Tuesday, 12 November 1996

Dear Friends,

1. It gives me great pleasure to welcome this group of representatives of *Non-Governmental Organizations and other Agencies* which in the international forum promote and defend the dignity of the human person. You have wished to have this meeting precisely because you recognize a substantial convergence between the teachings of the Catholic Church and the policies and goals of your organizations on many issues crucial for the future of the human family.
2. You are gathered in Rome in conjunction with the Summit of the *Food and Agriculture Organization*, which is addressing the nutritional needs of the world, especially of the world's poor. In the Creator's plan, the universal destination of the earth's goods implies that every individual has a basic right to adequate food. The spectre of hunger and malnutrition is truly an offence against the Creator's image in every human being. This is especially so when hunger is the consequence of the misuse of resources or of excessive self-interest in the context of opposed political and economic groups, or when it results from the rigid application of the profit principle to the detriment of solidarity and co-operation for the benefit of all who make up the human family. Believers must feel compelled in conscience to work to reduce the differences between North and South, and to build just and honest relations on every level—social, economic, cultural and ethical—of human life on this earth (cf. John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1986*, 8 Dec. 1985). Christians must draw encouragement and a sense of urgency from the words of Christ himself: "I was hungry and you gave me food" (Mt. 25:35).
3. Many of you seek to address another, even more terrible indignity: namely, threats to life itself,

and the systematic elimination of innocent lives, in particular the unborn. As we come to the end of a century unprecedented for its destruction of life, most often in the name of totalitarian ideologies, are we to conclude that *democracy too has become the sponsor of unparalleled attacks on human life*? On the one hand, the advance of democratic freedoms has given rise to a new affirmation of human rights, codified in important international declarations and agreements. On the other hand, when freedom is detached from the moral principles which govern justice and disclose what is the common good, *democracy itself is undermined and becomes the instrument by which the strong impose their will on the weak*, as we increasingly see happening around us.

4. As you well know, it is not enough to deplore this situation. There is much to be done in educating consciences and public opinion to the reality of what, for reasons of brevity but with solid justification, has been called "the culture of death". I invite you to *renew your efforts to promote "the culture of life"*, and to seek a higher moral vision which will enable you to co-operate ever more closely in defending the sacredness of every human life. Harness your energies, your talents, your expertise, for this immense and vital effort in favour of humanity!

May God grant you the strength and courage to speak in the international arena for those who have no voice and to defend those who are defenceless. May he pour out his abundant blessings upon you and your families.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XIX, 2 p.692-694.

L'Osservatore Romano 13.11.1996 p.6.

L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n. 47 p.9.

© Copyright 1996 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana