



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
FOR THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE *POPULORUM PROGRESSIO* FOUNDATION**

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President of the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum"
President of the *Populorum Progressio* Foundation

I am pleased to send through you my cordial greetings to the Bishops of the *Populorum Progressio* Foundation and to their collaborators, who will meet this year in the City of Sucre, Bolivia, to celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of the institution's creation.

Helping the poor is a Gospel imperative, addressed with vigour to all Christians, who are never allowed to pass by their neighbour who has been stricken with misfortune (cf. Lk 10,33-35). In this regard, I note with sadness that, if in some of the developing countries the scourge of poverty strikes a major part of the population, the most abandoned groups of such a society do not have even what is most essential. Because of this, it was my wish to contribute to the lessening of the effects of such a terrible situation with the creation ten years ago of the *Populorum Progressio* Foundation (2 February 1992), having concern especially for the indigenous population, those of mixed racial background, and the African-Americans of Latin America. It is intended to be a sign expressing my closeness to those who find themselves in conditions of grave privation and who are frequently neglected by society or by the public authorities themselves, often incapable of doing anything for them. This type of institution carries out practical initiatives by which God's love for humanity, especially for the poor, is manifested (cf. Lk 7,22).

Each year this Foundation finances as many projects as possible, through which the overall development of the poorest farming communities may be assisted. Accordingly, between 1993 and 2001, 1,596 projects have been helped, for a total of \$ 13,142,529.00 U.S., thanks particularly to the generosity of Italian Catholics, through the good offices of the Italian Episcopal Conference,

and through gifts from other benefactors and Church organizations.

It is noteworthy that the particular Churches in Latin America also participate in financing the projects. Besides this, a characteristic of the work of the Foundation is that the persons responsible for approving projects and deciding on the distribution of funds come from the very areas in which the projects are implemented. The Administrative Council is, in fact, composed of six Ordinaries from Latin America and the Caribbean, who are asked to examine and discuss the requests presented.

The social situation is unfortunately very difficult in various parts of Latin America. The States and the particular Churches of these countries, each in its own area of responsibility, must work to improve the conditions of life for everyone, to the exclusion of no one. The underlying causes are aggravated also by the presence of injustice and corruption. Moreover, in some countries the external debt has reached astronomical figures and impedes economic development. For this reason, the Apostolic See feels obliged to call attention to this scourge, which paralyzes energies and the hope for a better future. As I recalled in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, Catholics everywhere must feel themselves called upon to collaborate, since "fraternal charity implies attention to all the needs of one's neighbour. "If one has riches in this world and, seeing his brother in need closes his heart to him, how can the love of God remain in him?" (1 Jn 3,17)" (n. 27).

As Christians, the word of God does not exempt us from the strict obligation to offer our help and make it our responsibility to search for true justice. It exhorts us to care for our brothers and sisters who are truly in need. Besides, our role as evangelizers leads us to this, since there is an intimate connection between evangelization and human promotion, and because good works favour acceptance of the Good News. In addition, works of charity towards our neighbour make the preaching of the Gospel more credible.

Most of all, I wish to express my gratitude to all of those who, during these ten years, have worked to set up the structure and activities of the *Populorum Progressio* Foundation: Bishops, priests and laity. By supervising and ensuring financing, they have made it possible for projects to be correctly managed. Their generous dedication has contributed to making the Foundation more widely known, fostering among the beneficiaries and Christian communities in general trust in God's help and the hope of a better future.

With the assurance of my prayers for a fruitful meeting, I implore the light of the Holy Spirit for the discernment of the best way to continue this important work. I entrust the work of the meeting to the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, who, under the title of Our Lady of Guadalupe, is venerated throughout the American continent. At the same time, as a sign of the Church's gratitude, I impart to the members of the Foundation and to its benefactors a special Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 14 June 2002.

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