



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONFERENCE ON
"THE BUSINESS EXECUTIVE: SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
AND GLOBALIZATION"**

*To My Venerable Brother
Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino
President of the Pontifical Council Iustitia et Pax*

I was pleased to be informed of the Conference on "The Business Executive: Social Responsibility and Globalization" which is meeting in these days under the auspices of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the International Christian Union of Business Executives. I would ask you kindly to convey to all present my warm greetings and good wishes.

It is my hope that the Conference will be a source of inspiration and renewed commitment to Christian business leaders in their efforts to bear witness to the values of God's Kingdom in the world of commerce. Their work is in fact rooted in that dominion and stewardship which God has given man over the earth (cf. Gen 1:27) and finds particular expression in the promotion of creative economic initiatives with enormous potential to benefit others and to raise their material standard of living. Because "there is no human activity – even in secular affairs – which can be withdrawn from God's dominion" (*Lumen Gentium*, 36), Christians charged with responsibility in the business world are challenged to combine the legitimate pursuit of profit with a deeper concern for the spread of solidarity and the elimination of the scourge of poverty which continues to afflict so many members of the human family.

The present Conference is taking place at a time when the financial and commercial sector is becoming increasingly aware of the need for sound ethical practices which ensure that business activity remains sensitive to its fundamentally human and social dimensions. Since the pursuit of profit is not the sole end of such activity, the Gospel challenges business men and women to embody respect both for the dignity and creativity of their employees and customers and the demands of the common good. On a personal level, they are called to develop important virtues

such as "diligence, industriousness, prudence in undertaking reasonable risks, reliability and fidelity in interpersonal relationships, and courage in carrying out decisions which are difficult and painful" (*Centesimus Annus*, 32). In a world tempted by consumerist and materialist outlooks, Christian executives are called to affirm the priority of "being" over "having."

Among the important ethical issues facing the business community at present are those associated with the impact of global marketing and advertising on the cultures and values of various countries and peoples. A sound globalization, carried out in respect for the values of different nations and ethnic groupings, can contribute significantly to the unity of the human family and enable forms of cooperation which are not only economic but also social and cultural. Globalization must become more than simply another name for the absolute relativization of values and the homogenization of life-styles and cultures. For this to happen, Christian leaders, also in the commercial sphere, are challenged to bear witness to the liberating and transforming power of Christian truth, which inspires us to place all our talents, our intellectual resources, our persuasive abilities, our experience and our skills at the service of God, our neighbour and the common good of the human family.

With these sentiments, I offer prayerful good wishes for the deliberations of the Conference and willingly invoke upon all taking part God's blessings of wisdom, joy and peace.

From the Vatican, 3 March 2004

IOANNES PAULUS II