



The Holy See

*ADDRESS OF PAUL VI TO THE DIRECTORS OF THE WORLD WILDLIFE FUND**

Saturday, 21 June 1969

Gentlemen,

It is an honour for Us to receive such a distinguished group, representing the Directors of the World Wildlife Fund, the principal objective of which is the conservation of nature in all its forms: landscapes, waters, air, soil, flora and fauna, on a world-wide scale.

In principle, this objective may be accepted and approved. Man, the culmination of creation, always occupies the first place. To him was its said: "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (*Gen. 1, 28*). Man was to dominate nature by his toil: "God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden, to till it and keep it" (*Gen. 2, 15*). Through his labour, man perfects and transforms all of creation. He extracts for his own use its resources and its forces. By cultivating the earth, he renders it useful and habitable.

Nevertheless, though he is the master of creation, man must not destroy it. He must admire it, he must explore and know it (cf. *Gen. 2, 20*). He cultivates the soil and raises animals. How often Sacred Scripture refers to the human occupations of farming, fishing, herding flocks of sheep and cattle;

All of nature, created by a loving God, reflects the Creator. "The heavens are telling the glory of God" (*Ps. 19, 1*) and the earth and all that is in it proclaims His handiwork. Saint Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, was considered during the middle ages to be a great master of natural science. In his *Hexameron*, a study of the six days of creation, and in many other works, he has beautiful pages on animal life, and the ways in which it manifests the wisdom and providence of the Creator.

“Manifested at the beginning of time, the divine plan is that man should subdue the earth, bring creation to perfection, and develop himself” (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 57). The perfecting of creation supposes its conservation, and his is the aim proposed by your meritorious association. The image of the Creator must shine forth ever more clearly, not only in His creature Man, but in all of His creation in nature.

We therefore wish you well in your admirable efforts, and We invoke upon you and your colleagues, upon the various national associations which represent you, and upon all who contribute to the great cause of preservation of natural riches and beauty, abundant heavenly graces and blessings.

**Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, vol. VII, p.980-981.

L'Osservatore Romano 22.6.1969 p.1.

ORa n°27 p.4.