



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
AD UN GRUPPO DI MEMBRI
DELL'UFFICIO INTERNAZIONALE DEL LAVORO****

Sabato, 30 maggio 1992

1. It is with great joy that I receive you today, Mr. President of the Administrative Council of the International Labour Organization, as well as the members of this prestigious institution who are accompanying you. Your visit reminds me of the warm welcome I received in Geneva in 1982. It gives me the opportunity to express to you once again the respect I have for the nations and organizations you represent.

2. I thank you for the two topics you are presenting today: "The Social Teachings of the Catholic Church and the World of Work" as well as "The Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Rerum novarum". I rejoice at the special attention the organization is giving to the Church's teachings and I appreciate the convergence of its viewpoints with the Church's social doctrine. Recently the symposium on "Work, Culture and Religions" has aroused renewed interest and common concerns about today's social questions.

3. Today we are witnessing a globalization of social questions. The difficulties of the countries of the East and the South have repercussions on international markets. The rapid political changes in economic structures which increase the responsibilities of social agents, ruler, of nations, heads of businesses and workers. The slow and laborious evolution of many countries, which have chosen to follow the rules of free enterprise economy and democratization re-enforce beyond doubt the mission and vigilance of the International Labour Organization. For it is sometimes said that you are "the social conscience of the world".

4. According to the Philadelphia Declaration, it is up to your Organization to encourage discussions and collaboration between governments, heads of businesses and the representatives of workers in order to find solutions for placing man at the centre of economic realities. It also falls

to you to mobilize the energies of the international community to fight the poverty stemming from unemployment, underemployment, lack of training, and inadequacy in health care among the populations. Poverty appears to be one of the major obstacles to social justice.

These objectives assigned to your Organization require efforts of imagination and consistent, courageous decisions, as well as some sacrifices from the richer nations in order to improve substantially the chronic situation of entire populations. Collaboration with the International Monetary Fund and with the World Bank is also necessary to curb the scourge of poverty, a scourge whose eradication will be an incontestable sign of social progress. To achieve this, we can hope for a greater clarity in political and economic decisions. Financial and budgetary requirements alone cannot justify a lack of knowledge about the social dimension in choices to be made. The inalienable dignity of the human person and the protection of workers, primary values of all group management, cannot be treated lightly with impunity. Here again your concerns meet those of the Church: man must occupy the central place in the economic, political and social restructuring brought about by the liberalization of markets and the progressive access to democracy, as the Director General of the International Labour Organization reminds us in his report to the Conference which will open shortly.

5. Social development takes place through tripartite discussions, and it is your vocation to foster and promote this dialogue to the four corners of the world. One cannot, however, be satisfied with reuniting the political and economic representatives, employers and workers. The discussions must lead the opposing parties to become increasingly partners and agents of development, builders of a more just society, taking care during the negotiations not to serve solely the interests of any one category, but rather the cause of humanity. Leaders will have, in particular, the role of encouraging economic development and of regulating social dialogue. The heads of businesses and the workers' representatives will have to train themselves to speak and act truthfully for the good of all.

6. I hope that the officials and personnel of the International Labour Organization will continue working tenaciously in order to humanize the world of work and establish social justice. Please allow me also to underscore the notable efforts that your Organization is making in favour of the underprivileged social groups of our day: migrants, refugees and the victims of child labour. These persons, in tenuous situations and often left undefended, need assistance and support. It is up to you to remind the international community that it must always act for the best so that all may be agents and recipients of development.

Finally, I express my best wishes for the coming International Labour Conference which will be held in a few day time in Geneva. I pray the Lord to make the members of the International Labour Organization the servants of man, the image of the Creator, called to be stewards of creation. I cordially bless you and your families.

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