



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE
OF CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

To Mr Joseph Pirson

President of the Conference of Catholic International Organizations

1. "We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 *Thes* 1: 2-3). In repeating the Apostle Paul's words to the Thessalonians, I am pleased to greet you, as well as the participants in the 33rd General Assembly of the Conference of Catholic International Organizations and, through them, the members of the many Catholic international organizations throughout the world.

This gathering marks an important stage in the course of your preparation for the Great Jubilee. I hope that it will be an opportunity for each of your organizations to reaffirm their commitment to evangelization, and that it will be a favourable time for their members to strengthen their faith and witness.

You have decided to hold your meeting in Lebanon. This is a good idea because you will be able to receive the witness of the Christians of this land, who are called to respond courageously to St Paul's exhortation: "Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

Contribute to the needs of the saints, practise hospitality" (*Rom* 12: 12-13). By discovering the life and commitments of Lebanese Christian communities, I hope that you will also come to understand their millenary tradition and, on this basis, retrace the steps of salvation history.

2. The area where you are meeting clearly sheds light on the theme you have chosen: "The eradication of poverty: our practices and perspectives". In a world all too often marked by greed, violence and deceit, which leave their mark in various forms of alienation and exploitation, it is

urgently necessary to encourage a new effort of solidarity. It is equally desirable to mobilize consciences and ethical resources in order boldly to seek more humane solutions to the problems of so many peoples left on the margins of the globalization process, and whose weakest members are excluded from the benefits of development.

The issues connected with the poverty of individuals and peoples, which in our day dominate the international scene, are of critical importance. They cannot be resolved by facile slogans or ineffective statements. As Catholic international organizations, you have a long experience and great competence in the area of international life. You know the difficulties encountered and the efforts of the community of nations to face the impoverishment of an ever growing portion of humanity. I encourage you energetically to promote a culture of solidarity and cooperation among peoples, in which everyone accepts his responsibilities to eradicate extreme poverty, a source of violence, bitterness and scandal (cf. Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee *Incarnationis mysterium*, n. 12); you will thus have a share in proclaiming the Gospel; you will help men and women discover the face of God, Father of all mercies, and will help build a world where justice and peace reign. Therefore, a radical change in mentalities and international practices, based on genuine conversion of heart, is urgently needed.

3. With Christians who in different ways participate in international life and cooperate with all who truly seek man's good, you can make a special contribution to the work of the human community.

To carry out this commitment more fully, I encourage you to turn constantly to the sources of your Catholic identity and to be inspired by the heritage of the Church's social teaching. It is this heritage, in fact, which makes your distinctive presence constructive and hopeful. The Church needs you and relies on you. I pray that the grace of the Great Jubilee will help you enter the third millennium inspired by a concern to discover new and more effective ways to be present and active in the world. I encourage you to pursue this renewal with determination, constantly strengthening your membership in the Church, with the support of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, the dicastery of the Roman Curia with which you maintain a trusting and profound dialogue, as well as with the Secretariat of State.

I entrust the work of your assembly to Christ, the Lord of history, and cordially impart to you my Apostolic Blessing, which I gladly extend to those taking part in this meeting, to all who work in Catholic international organizations and to their families.

From the Vatican, 30 September 1999.