



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS PAUL VI  
TO THE 13th SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION\***

*Sunday, 28 November 1965*

You are now meeting in Rome to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of your organization. The latter, which the whole world, we may say, has now become accustomed to calling FAO by its initials, appears to us as one of the most benevolent initiatives following the post World War period.

Without mentioning its other merits, its concern for spiritual and religious values is sufficiently demonstrated by your presence at this Mass, which you elected to attend. And perhaps some of you, as we do, will have evoked on this occasion the memory of another Mass, which at the request of your predecessors, we celebrated in the Vatican grottoes in 1951, shortly after your organization established its headquarters in Rome.

We were then collaborating with Pope Pius XII, who gave his encouragement to the new born institution as did his successor, John XXIII, at a later date.

As you see, there is a sort of tradition between the Holy See and FAO of respect and friendship, which has been created over the years and which we are happy today to have another eloquent testimonial.

If the Church has contributed the weight of its moral authority to an organization such as yours, whose aims appear to be purely temporal and thus seem to be outside of its competence, it is because the Church is fully aware that the fate of all humanity is at stake here. Nothing that affects man's fate is foreign to the Church.

You have in twenty years done much in a technical and material nature: we congratulate you

heartily on these accomplishments, and the people who benefited from your intervention are grateful. Could more and better things have been done? It is possible. Regardless of how noble the aims, no institution in this world is perfect. You have, in any case, achieved a very important advance on the psychological and moral level: you have contributed towards an awareness in the world of one of the most serious problems of our era which is perhaps the greatest threat to peace in the world: the problem of hunger.

It has been, authoritatively stated in the course of your meetings during these last few days that more than half the population of the world does not eat enough to appease hunger; entire populations are still undernourished; and from the financial mechanisms of the modern world it would seem that the gap between rich and poor is growing instead of diminishing.

Your primary mission – to relieve man of hunger – appears now to be conditioned by an even greater problem, of which you are fully aware: that of development. Your task is becoming one of education: you must enable the developing countries to create the economic and technical conditions to assure them of the possibility of feeding their populations. This is the only way in which we can hope to find a final solution to the problem of hunger and misery in the world.

The immensity of the task, requires from those who work on it, an act of faith. It requires a refusal to admit a fatalistic determinism in the economic evolution of the world and, a belief in the possible success of a strong, coordinated effort to guide and direct this development.

You have this faith, Gentlemen. You have confidence in man, in society, in the possibilities of production, distribution and the equitable use of the immense resources which the Creator has placed at the disposal of human-kind. Twenty years of intense activity, marked by all sorts of happy initiatives, particularly a resounding world-wide campaign against hunger, prove that you believe in the efficacy of the action undertaken and that you have the will to make it succeed. You also have the means to do so, and you are the only ones to have them on such a vast scale. And this is why, following our predecessors, we encourage you with all our power to pursue and intensify your efforts and we willingly give them the moral backing you are soliciting from the Catholic Church. We also know that the Hierarchy and the faithful consider FAO to be the necessary and effective organization in this field, and that they will continue to cooperate, as they did during the world-wide campaign against hunger, with your activities throughout the world.

We have confidence that thanks to this support and the support you will receive increasingly from all men of good will, FAO will experience, after the celebration of its twentieth anniversary, a new impulse which will bring it closer to the desirable end we recalled last month at the distinguished United Nations General Assembly: to ensure that "sufficient bread is available for the table of mankind."

With this wish and this hope in our heart and the pledge of our good will, we invoke upon you, your

families, your work and the whole of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization the most abundant blessings of Heaven.

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*\*Paths to Peace* p.307-308.

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