



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF PAUL VI
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE
GENERAL CONFERENCE OF F.A.O.***

Sunday, 16 November 1969

*Mister President,
Mister Director General,
Your Excellencies, Gentlemen,*

What can we, the Catholic Church, do with regard to the immense efforts of the Food and Agriculture Organization? Such is the question posed by you and by us today.

1. First of all, We have noted with satisfaction how much you are aware of the immense needs of the greater part of mankind, which is underdeveloped. Hunger in the world-this phenomenon is known, is statistically measured, located in its demographic framework, and abundantly provided with estimates for the future. To take an attentive look at this need is in itself a highly valuable humanitarian act, for it follows the example of Christ Who said: "I have compassion on the multitude" (*Mt. 15, 32*). Hence Our first reaction is one of praise for your admirable efforts.

2. We desire, however, to make Our appeal to the world also in favour of the hungry, collaborating in your action by Our exhortation. To all, then, to all peoples, to the rich, the producers, to politicians and economists, to youth-We address Our appeal in favour of "suffering humanity" ([Discourse to the International Labour Office, June 10, 1969](#); No. 18).

Woe to those who dissipate their goods and their revenues in scandalous spending, whether for luxuries or for war! Woe to those who selfishly enjoy their wealth without having the slightest care for the poor-for the poor are not only individuals but families, social classes and whole peoples! We must ever repeat without tiring the appeal of Our Encyclical Letter "[Populorum progressio](#)": "When so many peoples are hungry . . . all public or private waste, all ostentatious spending,

national or personal, all exhausting armament races, become an intolerable scandal. It is Our duty to denounce it. May those responsible hearken to Our voice before it is too late” (No. 53). This We asked at Bombay, this We requested again in Our Encyclical (No. 51), this is the appeal We renew today: That there be set up “a great World Fund derived from a part of the monies used for military expenditures, in order to help the most unfortunate”. As for Ourselves, despite the meagreness of Our means, We wished the creation of a “Populorum progressio” Fund, to show the great importance We attach to this matter, and the urgency attending its realization.

With all Our heart, then, do We greet all those courageous offerings conspiring towards this end, all positive initiatives, all generous undertakings-and We hope that they will become ever more active and attract much imitation.

3. So far, then, praise and exhortation. But We can also give you something else, something more specially Our own, namely a word of hope. We know that this period immediately following on the first Development Decade is marked by some disillusionment. This shows you how much hope is reposed in you, how heavy a responsibility is yours. But be sure of this: You will succeed if only you persevere. For you are, in fact, promoting a design already prepared in the sector of human destiny-the design of Divine Providence, the beneficent intention of God, Who is always ready to respond to our requests if they are intelligent and courageous. We tell you boldly: Be daring, in wisdom and fearlessness, for thus will you call forth the action of Our Father in Heaven. For your action cannot remain a merely profane thing; it is also, in its own way, a prayer: “Give us this day our daily bread” (*Mt.* 6, 11).

4. Finally, after praise, exhortation and hope, there remains for Us to say to you a powerful and mysterious word. All may not, perhaps, be able to understand it in itself, because for this one needs that mysterious knowledge called faith. But all can appreciate it in its consequences; for it is a power-idea, a word which shakes man up, and makes him see and serve Christ in the poor and hungry man: “I was hungry . . .” (*Mt.* 25, 42). This word of love is ours; it is a new and transcendental motive over and above those which civilization proposes to us. This word pushes us to take upon ourselves the burdens of others, and turns our sacrifices into joy. A man works devotedly for another man, because that man is his brother, called like himself “to share, as a son, in the life of the living God, the Father of all men” (“Populorum progression”, No. 21).

5. This is the message We humbly guard, and which as in duty bound We repeat to you this morning in this Basilica of Saint Peter’s. May Christ, Whose first Vicar he was, Whose present representative We are as Peter’s Successor, help each and every one of you in your task; may He light in your hearts His own burning love for each of us; may His charity animate your actions. For today charity must be truly international.

The work you must accomplish, lucidly and generously, is immense. It is up to you to take up the challenge given you, courageously and fearlessly. Such is Our wish and hope as We bestow upon

you, with all Our heart, upon all those who are dear to you, as a pledge of abundant divine graces for the deliberations of F.A.O. General Conference's Fifteenth Session and for the fruitfulness of its results, Our paternal Apostolic Blessing.

**Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, vol. VII, p.737-739.

L'Osservatore Romano 17.11. 1969 p.1.

ORa n.48 p.6.

Paths to Peace p.312-313.