



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS PAUL VI TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN A MEETING OF EUROPEAN YOUNG FARMERS*

Friday, 14 December 1973

Young European farmers,

You are concluding your Rome congress on the agricultural policy of Europe with regard to the Third World countries with a courteous visit to the Pope. We greatly appreciate your stop. We would like the warmth of our welcome and the simplicity of our remarks to find an echo in each of you.

The programme of your meeting clearly reveals your passion as young farmers to save the rural world, so indispensable to the vitality of European nations, and at the same time to promote its genuine solidarity with the agricultural regions of the Third World. But then, why did you come to us? To receive advice of a technical nature? It is not our role and you have teachers in this matter. To know what we think of your problems and plans? *Mater et Magistra*, *Populorum Progressio*, *Octogesima Adveniens*, the document of the last synod on Justice in the world, remain the unmistakable testimonies of the interest the Church takes in your weighty questions. This is not the place to quote them again. At this short meeting, we wish above all to manifest to you our great esteem and our encouragement.

You have already laboured a great deal and suffered much, to avert the exodus from the countryside, to rationalize farming, coordinate plans, specialize production, open up markets, lower frontiers, develop professional organisms, interest public authorities. Many reforms are to be pursued or established. Your youth, your knowledge, your experience are in the act of winning a hard battle: to create for all farmers, and particularly for future generations, conditions of life that meet the demands of a complete humanism. Do not let yourselves be disheartened by the prophets of woe as regards the future of the total world. This battle is being fought not just to find new and efficacious structures to ensure the defence and survival of the countryside. It must be

constantly inspired by the pursuit of quality of life it is not just a question of having more, but above all of being more. Everything you do in this direction will increase the value, in depth, of your agricultural environment and even the whole of European society, bound in solidarity to it. This is of prime importance, and you will not be surprised at our insistence. How could Europe, in fact, lay claim to the development of other peoples if, within itself, this development did not assume all its dimensions, economic, political social, cultural and spiritual? Man, even satiated, will never be satisfied if his dynamism is not geared to aims that go beyond himself. For us, "there is not true humanism but that which is open to the Absolute and is conscious of a vocation which gives human life its true meaning". (*Populorum Progressio*. n 42).

In this perspective, you are right to wish to make more aware of all these aspects of an international and humanizing agricultural policy, your socio-professional environments, your fellow-countrymen, those in charge of the common good in your different countries, and also those in charge of the European Community. We have noticed, moreover, the proposals you intend to submit in the near future to the governments concerned: the integration of aid to the Third World in the home policy of States, the coordination of this policy of cooperation between the member States of the Community, the extension of cooperation to all poor countries, and not just to those which are bound by bilateral agreements, which are often very narrow, a large increase of financial and technical aid. We wish very much that these proposals be heard.

It remains for us to encourage those among you who are about to embody this European solidarity by taking up work in the rural areas of the Third World, and all those who follow this example. You are convinced that certain shortcomings of the first cooperation decade, partly inevitable, are a serious call to do far more and far better. Would it be normal, among other things, to develop in the first place an industry meeting secondary needs, while neglecting to exploit to the maximum the agricultural resources capable of satisfying the priority needs of underfed populations? We would like above all to persuade you that it is the spirit of the cooperation that must be changed. The populations you will reach have a deep need to be respected in their originality, to be awakened and trained with patience and abnegation, to be loved. Is it not this fundamental attitude, moreover, that you must adopt with regard to the European country people who are not yet open to the ideas and methods that you hold dear? In a word, your mission, in the Third World as in Europe, will succeed if it is animated by the passion to serve.

A good number of you share the Christian faith. How could these people fail to be happy and comforted on hearing that today Christ the Saviour is still looking for disciples ready to put their knowledge and power generously in the service of all men? The Church' herself, in the wake of the recent Council, is greatly concerned to put this genuinely evangelical spirit into practice.

Praying to the Holy Spirit to strengthen you in these intentions, We invoke the Lord's Blessings on each of you, on your homes, and on those you represent.

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