



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS**

Saturday, 21 May 1977

Dear friends,

Responding to the request for an audience, we very willingly welcome today the members of the Executive Board of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. In you we greet with friendship and respect all the workers whom you represent throughout the World—all those men and women whose professional interests you endeavour to promote.

In times like our own, the problems affecting the lives of working people greatly surpass all national boundaries and call for internationally-coordinated action. And you are not at all surprised that a World-wide body such as the Catholic Church is vitally interested in such themes as the dignity of the worker and the establishment of conditions befitting human labour.

The Catholic Church must be faithful to her founder, Christ, who multiplied bread to satisfy physical and spiritual hunger; and at his command she preaches an uplifting Gospel of peace and freedom. To all who want peace she enjoins the quest for justice, adding that true liberation will take place only in the possession of truth.

Today, as in the past, the Church works to see her principles applied to concrete situations, and by her social doctrine she desires to shed light on the mystery of life as expressed in human labour. In the words of the Second Vatican Council, she wishes to see the workers of the world attain their dignity and fulfil their vocation by being partners “in the work of bringing God’s creation to perfection” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 67).

With insistence therefore the Catholic Church proclaims that “human work . . . is superior to the

other elements of economic life” (*Ibid.*). This conviction of the Church is in turn intimately linked to a global view of man, his nature and destiny; it is a global view in contrast with an ideology that accepts atheistic materialism, the dialectic of violence, the absorbing of individual freedom into collectivity and the denial of transcendence to man and his personal and collective history.

Our hope today is that your united efforts will indeed serve to advance the cause of human dignity in the workers associated with your Confederation. And we would likewise hope that you would enlarge your vision to all those who need your help and can benefit from your efforts. We are appealing for the young people of the world, so vitally affected by unemployment and by its tragic consequences.

To all of you we extend our exhortation not to falter in the pursuit of human dignity in the endeavour to create a more just society, a more fraternal world. And we ask Almighty God to assist you in this noble cause.