



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO MR JACQUES DIOUF, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF FAO
ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD FOOD DAY 2005**

*To Mr Jacques Diouf,
Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations (FAO)*

This year, which marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*, the celebration of World Food Day reminds us that hunger and malnutrition unfortunately feature among the worst scandals that still affect the life of the human family. This makes the FAO's action, under your direction, ever more urgent.

The millions of people whose very lives are at risk because they lack the minimum basic food call for the attention of the International Community, because it is the common duty of us all to care for our brothers and sisters.

Indeed, famine is not entirely due to geographical and climatic situations or to the unfavourable circumstances linked to harvests. It is also caused by human beings themselves and by their selfishness, which is expressed by gaps in social organization, by rigidity in economic structures all too often oriented solely to profit, and even by practices against human life and ideological systems that reduce the person, deprived of his fundamental dignity, to being a mere instrument.

True world development, organized and integral, which everyone hopes for, requires on the contrary an objective knowledge of human situations, the identification of the real causes of poverty and practical responses whose priority is the appropriate formation of each person and community. Thus, the authentic freedom and responsibility that are proper to human action will be put into practice.

The theme chosen for this Day, *Agriculture and the dialogue of cultures*, is an invitation to consider

dialogue as an effective instrument to create the conditions for food security. Dialogue requires people and nations to join forces to serve the common good. The convergence of all the protagonists, combined with effective cooperation, can help to build *true peace*, making it possible to overcome the recurrent temptations of war that stem from differences in cultural outlook, race or level of development.

It is also important to be directly alert to human situations, with the aim of maintaining the diversity of development models and forms of technical assistance in accordance with the particular conditions of each country and each community, whether it is a matter of economic or environmental or even social, cultural and spiritual conditions.

Technical progress will only be truly effective if it has a place in a broader perspective that centres on man and is concerned to consider all his needs and aspirations, for, as Scripture says: "Not on bread alone is man to live" (cf. Dt 8: 3; Mt 4: 4). This will also enable every people to draw from its patrimony of values in order to share its material and spiritual riches for the benefit of all.

The ambitious and complex goals that your Organization sets itself will not be achieved unless the protection of human dignity, the first and last of the fundamental rights, becomes the criterion that inspires and directs all its efforts.

The Catholic Church, which also participates in actions that aim at truly harmonious development, in collaboration with the partners present on the spot, hopes to encourage the FAO's activity and efforts in order to initiate a true dialogue of cultures at her level and thereby to contribute to increasing the ability to nourish the world population, with respect for biodiversity. In fact, the human being must not rashly compromise the natural balance, a result of the order of creation, but on the contrary must take care to pass on to future generations an earth able to feed them.

In this spirit, I ask the Almighty to bless the mission of the FAO, which is so necessary, and the commitment of its directors and officials, with a view to guaranteeing to each member of the human family his or her daily bread.

From the Vatican, 12 October 2005

BENEDICT XVI

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