



The Holy See

***MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO MR JACQUES DIOUF, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF FAO
ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD FOOD DAY 2009***

H.E. Mr Jacques Diouf

Director General Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

If the celebration of World Food Day recalls the foundation of the FAO and its action in the fight against hunger and malnutrition in the world, it stresses above all the urgent need for interventions on behalf of all who are without daily bread, in so many countries, because of inadequate food security.

The actual crisis that is hitting all sectors of the economy without distinction is particularly harshly affecting the world of farming, whose situation is becoming dramatic. This crisis demands that Governments and the different elements of the International Community make decisive and effective decisions.

To guarantee people and peoples the possibility of overcoming the scourge of hunger is to assure them concrete access to adequate, healthy food. Indeed, this is a practical expression of the right to life which, although it is solemnly proclaimed, all too often remains far from being implemented fully.

The theme chosen by the FAO for World Food Day is: "*Achieving food security in times of crisis*". It is an invitation to consider agricultural work as a fundamental element of food security and consequently as fully part of economic activity. For this reason, farming must have access to adequate investments and resources. This topic calls into question and makes clear that by their nature the goods of creation are limited: they therefore require responsible attitudes capable of encouraging the sought-after security, thinking likewise of that of future generations. Thus profound solidarity and farsighted brotherhood are essential.

The realization of these objectives entails a necessary change in lifestyle and mindsets. It obliges the international community and its institutions to intervene in a more appropriate and forceful way. I hope that such an intervention may encourage cooperation with a view to protecting the methods of cultivating the land proper to each region and to avoiding a heedless use of natural resources. I also hope that this cooperation will preserve the values proper to the rural world and the fundamental rights of those who work the land. By setting aside privileges, profit and convenience, it will then be possible to achieve these objectives for the benefit of the men, women, children, families and communities that live in the poorest regions of the planet and are the most vulnerable. Experience shows that even advanced technical solutions lack efficiency if they do not put the person first and foremost, who comes first and who, in his or her spiritual and physical dimensions, is the alpha and the omega of all activity.

Rather than an elementary need, access to food is a fundamental right of people and peoples. It will therefore become a reality, hence a security, if adequate development is guaranteed in all the different regions. The drama of hunger in particular can only be overcome by "eliminating the structural causes that give rise to it and promoting the agricultural development of the poorer countries. This can be done by investing in rural infrastructures, irrigation systems, transport, organization of markets, and in the development and dissemination of appropriate agricultural technology that can make the best use of the human, natural and socio-economic resources that are more readily available at the local level" (*Caritas in Veritate*, n. 27).

Faithful to her vocation to be close to the most deprived, the Catholic Church promotes, sustains and participates in the efforts made to enable each people and each community to have access to the necessary means to guarantee an appropriate level of food security.

In expressing these wishes, I renew to you, Mr Director-General, the expression of my high esteem and I invoke an abundance of divine Blessings upon the FAO, upon the Member States and upon all the personnel.

From the Vatican, 16 October 2009.

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