



The Holy See

**VIDEO MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE MEETING
OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES:
"EXPO OF IDEAS 2015 - TOWARD THE MILAN CHARTER" Saturday, 7 February 2015**

Good evening to you all, women and men, who have gathered today to reflect on the theme:
Nourish the Planet, Energy for Life.

On the occasion of my visit to the FAO [Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations], I recalled that, in addition to “interest in the production, availability and accessibility of foodstuffs, in climate change and in agricultural trade”, which are crucial inspirational questions, “the first concern must be the individual person, who lacks daily nourishment, who has given up thinking about life, family and social relationships, and instead fights only for survival” ([*Address to the FAO, 20 November 2014*](#)).

Today, indeed, notwithstanding the proliferation of organizations and the various interventions of the international community regarding nutrition, we are experiencing what St Pope John Paul II called “the paradox of abundance”. In fact, “there is food for everyone, but not everyone can eat, while waste, excessive consumption and the use of food for other purposes is visible before our very eyes. This is the paradox! Unfortunately, this ‘paradox’ persists. There are few subjects about which there are as many fallacies as there are about hunger; few topics are as likely to be manipulated by data, statistics, by national security demands, corruption, or by grim references to the economic crisis” (*ibid.*).

To overcome the temptation of fallacies — that nominalistic way of thinking which continues to go beyond reality but never touches it — to overcome this temptation, I offer you three practical approaches.

1) Move from urgencies to priorities

Direct your gaze and heart not toward the pragmatic reason of its urgency which always appears as a temporary proposal, but toward a decisive approach to resolve the structural causes of poverty. Let us remember that inequality is the root of all social ills (cf. [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#), n. 202).

I would like to repeat to you what I wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*: say ‘no’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. It cannot be that when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure it is not newsworthy, but it is news when the stock market loses two points (cf. *ibid.*, n. 53). This is the result of the laws of competition, the survival of the fittest. Take heed: here we are not facing only the logic of exploitation, but that of waste; indeed, the excluded are not only the excluded or “the ‘exploited’ but the outcast, the ‘leftovers’” (*ibid.*, n. 53).

Therefore — if we truly want to resolve the problems and not lose ourselves in fallacies — it is necessary to resolve the root of all ills, which is inequality. To do this there are several essential decisions to take: to renounce the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and of financial speculation and to act primarily on the structural causes of inequality.

2) *Be witnesses of charity*

“Politics, though often denigrated, remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good. We need to be convinced that charity ‘is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones)’ (*ibid.*, n. 205).

Where then, should the starting point be for a healthy economic policy? To what is a sincere politician committed? What are the pillars of someone called to public administration? The answer is specific: the dignity of the human being and the common good. Unfortunately, however, these two pillars, which ought to shape all economic policies, often “seem to be a mere addendum imported from without in order to fill out a political discourse lacking in perspectives or plans for true and integral development” (*ibid.*, n. 203). Please be courageous and do not be afraid, in shaping economic policy, to be challenged by a greater meaning in life so you may be enabled “truly to serve the common good” and give you the strength to “increase the goods of this world and to make them more accessible to all” (*ibid.*).

3) *Be guardians, not masters of the Earth*

I recall again, as I did previously at the FAO, a phrase I heard from an elderly farmer, many years ago: “‘God always forgives offences and abuses; God always forgives. Men forgive at times; but the Earth never forgives!’ Protect our Sister Earth, our Mother Earth, so that she does not react with destruction” (*Address to the FAO, 20 November 2014*).

With regard to the Earth’s goods we are called “not to lose sight of the origin or purpose of these goods, so as to bring about a world of fairness and solidarity” (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 174). The Earth was entrusted to us in order that it be mother for us, capable of giving to each one what is necessary to live. I once heard something beautiful: the Earth is not an inheritance that we receive from our parents, but a loan that our children give to us, in order that

we safeguard it and make it flourish and return it to them. The Earth is generous and holds back nothing from those who safeguard it. The Earth, which is mother of all, asks for respect and not violence, or worse yet, arrogance from masters. We must return it to our children improved, safeguarded, for they have loaned it to us. The attitude of safeguarding is not the exclusive duty of Christians, it is everyone's. I entrust to you what I said during the Mass for the beginning of my ministry as Bishop of Rome: "Please, I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: let us be 'protectors' of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment. Let us not allow omens of destruction and death to accompany the advance of this world! But to be 'protectors', we also have to keep watch over ourselves! [...] We must not be afraid of goodness or even tenderness!". Safeguard the Earth not only with goodwill, but also with tenderness.

Hence, these are the three approaches I offer you in order to overcome the temptations of fallacies, of nominalism, of those who seek to do something but without the concreteness of life. Choose to begin with the priority: the dignity of the person; to be men and women witnesses of charity; to be unafraid to safeguard the Earth which is the mother of all.

I ask you all to pray for me: I need it. And I invoke God's blessing upon you. Thank you.