



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE 43rd SESSION OF THE
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION CONFERENCE**

*Madam President,
Mr. Director-General of the FAO,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:*

“Poverty, inequalities, lack of access to basic resources such as food, drinking water, health, education, housing, are a serious affront to human dignity!”. Pope Francis stressed as much in a message he sent to participants in the 43rd Session of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Conference. The Pope’s message was read aloud on Monday, 3 July, by Monsignor Fernando Chica Arellano, Holy See Permanent Observer at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Agencies (FAO, IFAD, and WFP). The following is a translation of the Holy Father’s message, which was originally in Spanish.

I wish to cordially greet all participants in the 43rd session of this Conference, who have come to Rome from the four corners of the world. I greet the president of this Assembly, Ms Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and the Director-General of the FAO, Mr Qu Dongyu, whom I congratulate on his election to a second term at the head of this Organization, at the same time encouraging him to continue his work, at a time when decisive and competent action to eradicate the scourge of hunger in the world, which is advancing rather than retreating, is inescapable.

Millions of people continue to suffer from poverty and malnutrition around the world, due to armed conflict, as well as climate change and the resulting natural disasters. Mass displacement, in addition to the other effects of global political, economic and military tensions, undermines efforts to ensure that people’s living conditions are improved on the basis of their inherent dignity. It bears repeating time and again: poverty, inequalities, lack of access to basic resources such as food, drinking water, health, education, housing, are a serious affront to human dignity!

Many experts today say that the goal of Zero Hunger will not be achieved within the time-frame set

by the international community. But let me say that the inability to fulfil common responsibilities should not lead us to turn initial intentions into new revised programmes which, instead of benefiting people by responding to their real needs, do not take them into account. On the contrary, we must be very attentive to and respectful of local communities, cultural diversity and traditional specificities, which cannot be altered or destroyed in the name of a short-sighted idea of progress which, in reality, risks becoming synonymous with “ideological colonization”. For this reason, and I never tire of highlighting this, interventions and projects must be planned and implemented in response to the cry of the people and their communities; they cannot be imposed from above or from bodies that only seek their own interests or profit.

The challenge we face demands joint and collaborative action by the entire family of nations. There can be no room for conflict or opposition, when the enormous challenges at hand require a holistic and multilateral approach. This is why the FAO and the other international organizations will only be able to fulfil their mandate and coordinate preventive and incisive measures for the benefit of all, especially the poorest, through a fair synergy jointly envisioned with farsightedness from all the parties concerned. Governments, businesses, academia, international institutions, civil society and individuals must make a joint effort, setting aside petty logic and biased visions, so that everyone benefits and no one is left behind.

The Holy See, for its part, will continue to offer its contribution to the common good, lending the experience and the work of the institutions linked to the Catholic Church, so that no one in our world may go without daily bread and that our planet may be given the protection it requires, so that it may once again become the beautiful garden that came from the hands of the Creator for the delight of mankind. May Almighty God richly bless your labours and efforts for the true progress of the whole human family.

Vatican City, 1 July 2023

FRANCIS

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