



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO THE DIOCESES OF
CAMPOBASSO-BOIANO
AND
ISERNIA-VENAFRO

MEETING WITH THE WORLD OF LABOUR AND INDUSTRY

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Great Hall of the University of Molise (Campobasso)
Saturday, 5 July 2014

Video

Hon. Mr. Rector,
Authorities, Students, University Staff, Professors,
Brothers and Sisters of the World of Labour,

Thank you for your welcome. Thank you most of all for having shared with me your current reality, your struggles and hopes. The Rector used an expression that I said once: that our God is a God of surprises. It is true, every day he surprises. He is like this, our Father. But he said another thing about God, which I shall take up now: a God who breaks moulds. Unless we have the courage to break moulds, we will never go forward because our God pushes us to do this: to be creative about the future.

My visit to Molise begins with this meeting with the world of labour, but we are at the University. And this is meaningful: it expresses how important research and information are, too, in response to the new and complex questions posed by the current economic crisis, on the local, national and international levels. A short time ago, a young farmer testified to his “vocation” by his choice of pursuing a degree in agriculture and working the land. The farmer’s staying on the land is not

standing still, it is having a dialogue, a fruitful dialogue, a creative dialogue. It is man's dialogue with his land which makes it blossom, makes it fruitful for all of us. This is important. A good education does not offer easy solutions, but it helps one to have a more open and more creative view the better to evaluate the resources of the territory.

I fully agree with what was said about "safeguarding" the land, so it may bear fruit without being "exploited". This is one of the greatest challenges of our time: changing to a form of development which seeks to respect creation. I see America — my homeland, too: many forests, stripped, which become land that cannot be cultivated, which cannot give life. This is our sin: exploiting the land and not allowing it to give us what it has within it, with our help through cultivation.

Another challenge emerged from the voice, of this good working mother, who also spoke on behalf of her family: her husband, her young son and the baby she is expecting. Hers is an appeal for employment and at the same time *for* her family. Thank you for this testimony! In fact, it is about trying to reconcile working hours with family time. But let me tell you one thing: when I go to confession and I confess — now not as often as when I was in the other diocese — when a young mom or dad comes, I ask: "How many children do you have?", and they tell me. And I ask another question, always: "Tell me: do you play with your children?". Most of them answer: "What are you asking, Father?" — "Yes, yes: do you play? Do you spend time with your children?". We are losing this capacity, this wisdom of playing with our children. The economic situation pushes us to this, to lose this. Please, spend time with our children! Sundays: she [*turns to the working mother*] referred to family Sundays, spending time.... This is a "crucial" point, a point which allows us to discern, to evaluate the human quality of the present economic system. And found within this context is also the issue of working Sundays, which concerns not only believers, but touches everyone, as an ethical choice. It is this area of gratuitousness that we are losing. The question is: "what do we want to give priority to?". Having Sundays free from work — apart from necessary services — stands to confirm that the priority is not economic but human, gratuitousness, not business relationships but those of family, of friends, for believers the relationship with God and with the community. Perhaps we have reached the moment to ask ourselves whether working on Sunday is true freedom. Because the God of surprises and the God who breaks moulds surprises and breaks moulds so that we may become more free: he is the God of freedom.

Dear friends, today I would like to join my voice to that of the many workers and businessmen of this region in asking that an "employment pact" be made. I have seen that in Molise an attempt is being made to constructively join forces in response to the ordeal of unemployment. Many jobs could be recovered through a planned strategy with the national authorities, an "employment pact" which can take advantage of the opportunities offered by national and European legislation. I encourage you to go forward on this path, which can bear good fruit here as well as in other regions.

I would like to return to a word that you [*turns to the worker*] said: dignity. Not having work is not

only to lack life's basic necessities, no. We can eat every day: we go to the *Caritas*, we go to this association, we go to the club, we go there and they feed us. But this is not the problem. The problem is not being able to bring home the bread: this is serious, and this takes away dignity! This takes away dignity. And the most serious problem is not hunger — even though this problem exists. The most serious problem is dignity. This is why we must work and defend our dignity, which work provides.

Finally, I would like to tell you that I was moved by the fact that you gave me a painting representing “maternity”. Maternity involves labour, but the labour of childbirth, and is directed at life, it is full of hope. I thank you not only for this gift, but I thank you even more for the testimony it contains: that of a labour full of hope. Thank you! And I would like to add a historical fact, which happened to me. When I was Provincial of the Jesuits, a chaplain needed to be sent to Antarctica, to live there 10 months out of the year. I thought it over, and a Fr Bonaventura De Filippis went. But did you know, he was born in Campobasso, he was from here! Thank you!