



The Holy See

*Message to the General Director
of the World Health Organization,
on occasion of the first World Aids Day **

1. In instituting the World Health Organization approximately forty years ago, the international community of peoples proposed to attain one of the highest goals to which the person of our day can aspire- to assure all peoples better physical and mental well-being through economic and health-care cooperation among States, through scientific research and the fight against all forms of illness.

2. The programme established by the World Health Organization in view of the new millennium, "Health for all - all for health ", points to the goal of this first world day of dialogue and communication about acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), which is intended to sensitize public opinion and public authorities to the struggle against an illness whose seriousness causes an understandable alarm on all levels.

I gladly associate myself with this initiative, and I wish to express my moral support, because we are all convinced that this illness affects not only the body, but rather the entire human person, as well as interpersonal relations and life in society.

3. The social institutions responsible for safeguarding public health are always urged to undertake all possible efforts to ensure its defence: however, that may only be done with respect for each person, and the whole person, by preventing the spread of the illness and in caring for those afflicted by it. The degree of civilization of any given society can be measured in the manner in which it responds to the needs of life and the suffering of the human person, precisely because the fragility of the mortal condition demands the greatest solidarity in the defence of the sacredness of life, from its beginning to its natural end, in every moment and phase of its evolution.

The Catholic Church which has received from her Founder, Jesus Christ, a heritage of special and attentive relations with the suffering, and this in every age, is no less concerned today with this new category of the sick. They must be looked upon as our brothers and sisters, whose human condition requires a special form of solidarity and help.

In expressing my wishes that the observance of this first world day on AIDS may contribute to strengthening, on the international level, the common engagement against such an illness and in favour of those who are afflicted by it, I want to give my assurance that the Catholic Church through her institutions, will not fail to have a special concern for that part of suffering humanity, which is the object of my affection and prayer.

Vatican, 28 November 1988.

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