



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II ON THE OCCASION OF THE X WORLD FOOD DAY*

I am happy to express my participation and encouragement on the occasion of the annual observance of World Food Day sponsored by your Organization in the context of its institutional mission of fighting hunger and malnutrition.

The theme chosen for this year, "Provisions for tomorrow", emphasizes each person's right to nourishment according to his or her needs, and it stresses the problems tied to the world population's present and future nourishment.

We certainly cannot underestimate the severity of the food scarcity experienced in certain countries and areas, as I underlined in the speech which I gave on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of my appeal for the Sahel: "Tens of millions of human beings suffer from chronic malnutrition, and death strikes too many children" (Ouagadougou, 29 January 1990, n. 3).

However, it is also opportune to recall, as the Holy See has often pointed out based on the official data of the United Nations and F.A.O., that the food currently produced and available throughout the world is sufficient to meet the nutritional needs of the world's population. How can one attempt to justify a policy which only seeks an overall increase in food production or, on the other hand, a forced limit on population's growth. What is necessary, rather, is to assure a just distribution of goods, seeing to it that they are effectively available, in such a way as to remedy the serious local and regional imbalances between food resources and the number of inhabitants in different countries.

There is an urgent need to confront the problem of hunger, and to do so in an effective way. However, in order to do so, it is indispensable to situate it in the larger context of the economic and social development of each nation as seen in its relation to the international community. Most of all, it is necessary to see to it that each country increases its own resources in order to achieve

self-sufficiency in food production. Moreover, one will have to have recourse to new development models, adopting food-aid policies which do not aggravate the situation of the less developed countries or increase their dependence.

To that end, it will be fitting to place special food reserves directly at the disposal of certain institutions - even guaranteeing them by international agreements - deposited in advance in regions which are experiencing crisis or at risk, in such a way that it will be possible to draw from them promptly, in conformity with the criteria of justice and equity.

This presupposes the elimination of every inopportune obstacle to exchange and the adoption of clear principles of solidarity through international accords which will also allow the countries which are economically weaker to have access to development.

The rich countries should concretely show their solidarity with those who possess less, avoiding artificial cutbacks in their production and making sure that the large reserves they have accumulated are put on the market. On the other hand, developing countries have the duty to adopt policies of economic and financial stabilization through wise domestic management and the application of criteria suggested by the recovery of the economy of different countries.

My heart's wish is that this World Food Day may contribute to renewed efforts on behalf of an effective cooperation among governments and international organizations in order to resolve more progressively the problem of hunger and malnutrition.

We must not yield to discouragement or pessimism in the face of the current problems. We should no longer let the disparity between the size of the problem and what has been accomplished to date in the fight against hunger and malnutrition be seen as a cause for the growing distrust of the international community.

Each person, especially those in positions of responsibility, will rather find encouragement to intensify the action they have begun, to organize it better and make it more effective, to adopt and coordinate bilateral or multilateral actions, and to make the most of the significant results already obtained in view of an ever more effective and lasting global cooperation.

These are my wishes. I entrust them to Almighty God, asking His aid for everyone.

From the Vatican, 10 October 1990

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