



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE**

*To my Venerable Brother
Archbishop François Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận,
President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace*

I am particularly happy to address this message to you and to the participants in the Seminar on the theme "From Debt Relief to Poverty Reduction", which the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace is currently hosting, in collaboration with other Catholic Organizations.

For many years now the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace has been in the forefront in addressing the question of the effects of the heavy burden of debt on the lives of the peoples of the poorest countries. Following the appeal I made in my Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, the preparation and celebration of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 has been the occasion for many people, both Christians and members of other religious traditions, to renew their efforts to find a definitive solution to this problem (cf. No. 51).

With gratitude to all those who were sensitive to my appeals, I wish to encourage them to ensure that the efforts and goodwill shown in this Jubilee Year will continue to bear fruit in the future. We cannot permit fatigue or inertia to weaken our commitment when the lives of the poorest are at stake.

The foundations of the Jubilee tradition were essentially religious. The Jubilee was an occasion to remind everyone in the community that "to God alone, as Creator, belonged the '*dominium altum*' - lordship over all Creation and over the earth in particular" (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 13). Today this tradition draws our attention to the fact that we are only stewards of the riches of creation, which in God's design are a common good to be shared by everyone. This is a vision which all who live in our interdependent world can understand and appreciate.

Our increasingly globalized world requires a corresponding increase of solidarity. Debt relief is part of a broader effort to achieve changed relationships between peoples and to establish a true sense of solidarity and sharing among all the Children of God, among all people. Despite great scientific progress, the scandal of severe poverty remains extremely widespread in our world. Awareness of the possibilities which modern scientific progress offers makes the persistence of such widespread poverty even more scandalous, especially when it is accompanied, as is often the case, by unbridled consumerism and ostentatious wealth.

It is my hope that the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace will intensify its efforts to be heard in discussions on ways of ensuring that debt relief becomes an effective instrument in the fight against poverty in today's world. I ask the Pontifical Council to continue to work closely with all those in the scientific and the development communities, as well as with those within International Organizations, who are striving to ensure that the spirit of cooperation which has been generated by the Jubilee experience will continue to develop in the future. It is important, therefore, that the debt relief initiatives launched by the wealthier nations and the international institutions should come rapidly to full fruition, in a manner which will enable the poorest countries to become themselves the driving force of efforts to fight poverty and bring the benefits of economic and social progress to their people.

Your Seminar is also a recognition of the fact that progress in the fight against poverty in developing countries requires the concerted efforts of all sectors in society. In my Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* I spoke of the need to foster the "subjectivity of society" (cf. No. 46), a society which enables each person to be an active subject by placing their God-given talents at the service of the wider community.

The institutions of the Catholic Church, as the wide participation at your Seminar shows, willingly contribute the experience of their service of the poorest to the fight against poverty. They do so with full respect for the positive traditions, values and cultures of the people they serve.

Jesus Christ came to "proclaim good news to the poor" (cf. *Lk* 4:18). May he be your support and inspiration during these days as you renew, in the light of the Great Jubilee, your special commitment to all who are poor and outcast. Commending you to the protection of Mary, *Mater pauperum*, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 3 December 2000

IOANNES PAULUS II

