



# The Holy See

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*Address of His Holiness Paul VI  
to the General Committee on Programming between FAO and Industries\**

*20 March 1969*

We wish, first, to thank your distinguished speaker, Dr. Victor Umbricht, for the words he has just pronounced. They show in a particularly happy fashion the nobility of the sentiments which animate you, and they well define the nature and the breadth of the contribution which your Group of great industrialists can bring, in cooperation with FAO, to the cause of the progress of developing peoples.

This cause, as you know, holds an important place in the concerns of the Church today. We therefore welcome with lively satisfaction an assembly of personalities so highly qualified, and we thank you for having taken time from your heavy schedule to come to visit us.

Everything which touches the well-being of humanity and its future finds an immediate and deep echo in the heart of the Church. And it is only right that your representative has evoked the names of our most recent predecessors and recalled their social teachings.

He also evoked the specter of hunger this terrible word suffices to express the degree of sharpness, of gravity and of urgency which the problem of development today presents, to which our Encyclical *Populorum Progressio* was devoted and to which we have returned very often since. It is, in our eyes, as in those of many, the key problem which governs the temporal future of humanity.

In effect, according to serious statistics, if things were allowed to go their own way, the gap between the industrialized countries and the developing ones would continue to grow wider. The result would be, by a sort of fate in the current dynamism of production, that the rich nations would get ever richer and the poor, poorer (cf. *Populorum Progressio*, n.8), with the ensuing inescapable aggravation of social tensions.

It is against this fatality that your action is aimed, and it could show itself to be of capital importance for the poor peoples, and so for the peace of the world and the happiness of mankind.

You are, in effect, aware that the real problem lies not in assisting the exterior of the poor countries but rather in furnishing to them the instruments necessary to improve by themselves their production, "and to discover, themselves, in faithfulness to their own genius, the means toward their own social and human progress" (*Populorum Progressio*, n. 64).

You have understood that herein lies a real mission which imposes itself on the industrial nations in the name of human fraternity; and your speaker has pointed out as a positive and encouraging element the fact that the industrial countries are realizing more and more the importance of this mission of theirs.

Of this task you wish to be the pioneers, in accelerating the rhythm of expansion of the industries related to agriculture in the developing countries. Every person of good will, it seems to us, must applaud this program. "For that is where it must aim. World solidarity, increasingly efficient, must allow all peoples to become themselves the artisans of their destiny" (*Populorum Progressio*, n. 65).

But a mission presupposes an ideal, and motives that are always elevated and disinterested. Every consideration of personal profit, of competition, of calculated interests must here disappear before the nobility and the urgency of the goal: to enable our less favored brothers and sisters finally to emerge from their humiliating misery and to arrive at conditions of life worthy of Man. It is certainly thus that you will understand it, ladies and gentlemen, and on this path you have gained our most active encouragement.

No doubt some will be surprised that a society of a supernatural order like the Church attaches such importance to projects of a temporal order. Our predecessor, Pius XII, already many years ago answered this objection, and he did not hesitate to affirm that "a supernaturalism which separates religion from economic and political needs and duties, as if they did not concern the Christian and the Catholic, is a thing unhealthy and foreign to the thought of the Church" (AAS 44(1952), 819). It suffices to say how coherent with faith is an attitude of "engagement" – in the current phrase – in temporal tasks at the service of humanity.

With all our heart we wish that your efforts, those of FAO and of the Public Powers in favour of the "Third World" may continually grow, and in this sentiment, we bestow on all of you, ladies and gentlemen, as evidence of our goodwill and as a pledge of divine protection our Apostolic Benediction.

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