



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI
TO THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE
OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY COUNTRIES***

Thursday, 16 September 1971

Your Excellencies, Gentlemen,

We greatly appreciate this desire you have manifested to meet us at end of the meeting you have just held at L'Aquila, of qualified representatives of the six present partners of the Common Market, on agricultural problems. Aware of the grave questions raised by the disparity of natural conditions and of social structures in European agriculture, We would just like to express to you our esteem, the assurance of our encouragement, and the comfort of our prayer and our Blessing.

And in the first place, as everyone knows, the balance of the European Community, so difficult to maintain and at the same time so necessary to ensure, would not be possible if the agricultural sector did not receive the planning and the readjustments it continually requires. Ten years ago now, our Predecessor Pope John XXIII, of venerated memory, felt the need to dedicate to it a considerable part of his encyclical *Mater et Magistra*. The problems he recalled have lost nothing of their acuteness: the exodus from the country has, on the contrary, increased, and, with it, the necessity of modernizing equipment, reorganizing work, rationalizing farming, specializing production, securing markets in a greater stability of prices, etc...

We are aware that, in this field, the extremely complex repercussions to which a decision may give rise are certainly more difficult to foresee and to control than in the industrial sector, and we invite you to attend more and more closely to the human problems they involve, at the level of each category of country people. Agriculture remains an indispensable basis of the vitality of our countries; it is even more so if we consider the food needs of the Third World, which the more developed countries cannot ignore. So farm workers need to overcome the impression that they belong to a "depressed Sector", and to receive from public opinion and the authorities esteem

and encouragement to carry out a task necessary for the common good.

This shows the scope and importance of the work to be done in order that agriculture- may be more and more able to accomplish the irreplaceable function it has in the life of the world. Reforms of structures will certainly have to be implemented courageously, and at the same time gradually. The best changes on the technical and economic plane would lead to nothing, in fact, if minds were not aware of their necessity, prepared to accept them and convinced in applying them, so true is it that everything that is done for man must be accomplished with his active participation.

While no category of farmers can, in fact, be deliberately sacrificed to the economic or political aims of a nation or of the European Community, they must all understand, however, that the defence of their own interests must always be reconciled with the promotion of the common good and therefore undergo a necessary coordination of projects and implementations on an increasingly vast scale. One of your most important tasks, it seems to us is to exert yourselves indefatigably to drive home this complementarity of the different agricultural sectors, to bring about an evolution of mentalities in this direction, and to prepare the way for the necessary arrangements without taking the place of the professional organisms, and with the constant concern to prevent the weakest from being sacrificed by plans drawn up with a view to better productivity.

A great many delicate problems already claim your attention: how to direct selection while avoiding the dangers of excessive specialization, how to enable farm workers to reach everywhere the living standard, the security and the human culture of other social categories without turning them away from their noble vocation or uprooting them from their natural ties, how to cope with the abundance of production without forgetting the want rampant elsewhere. We hope with you that the dynamism of agricultural populations, their constant desire for progress, their active collaboration, a wider sense of the common good, concern with justice and understanding of international solidarity, as well as attachment, of the highest moral and spiritual values, will help them to accept their share of necessary sacrifices. On these terms country people will also be able to reach a development which will be authentic only if it is both complete and based on solidarity, careful not to limit itself to mere material growth, but to promote the whole man as well as all men (cfr. *Populorum Progressio*, n. 14). On these conditions, the rural world will be able to take, within the European Community, the special place to which it is entitled, for its own prosperity and to the advantage of all. This means that the future must be envisaged with great hope if everyone, beginning with yourselves, contrives to make it sure with competence and humanity.

We warmly invoke upon your work, carried out within the Council of ministers – we greet with pleasure its present president, His Excellency Mr. Lorenzo Natali – and with the help of the delegates of the "Special Agricultural Committee" the abundance of divine graces. And for yourselves and for all your dear ones, we give you our Apostolic Blessing.

*ORa n.39 p.5.

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana