



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS

JOHN PAUL II

FOR LENT 1992

"Called to share the table of creation"

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Creation belongs to everyone. Yes, as Lent draws near, when our Lord Jesus Christ calls us in a particular way to conversion, I wish to address each one of you and invite you to think about this truth and to do good deeds which will show your sincerity of heart.

This same Lord, whose supreme proof of love we celebrate at Easter, was with the Father from the beginning, *preparing the wonderful table of creation, to which he meant to invite all without exception* (cf. Jn 1:3). The Church has understood this truth, made known since the dawn of Revelation, and she sees it as an objective to be proposed to people as a way of life (cf. Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35). In more recent times she has repeatedly preached the *universal destination of the goods of creation, both material and spiritual*, as a central theme of her social teaching. Continuing this long-standing tradition, the Encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, published on the occasion of the centenary of my predecessor Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, is meant to encourage reflection on this universal destination of goods, which comes before all particular forms of private property and which should give them their true meaning.

However, it is sad to see how, in spite of the frequency with which these clearly expressed truths have been proclaimed, *the earth with all its goods - which we have compared to a great banquet to which all the men and women who have lived or will live have been invited - is unfortunately in many ways still in the hands of a few minorities*. Wonderful are the goods of the earth, both those which come directly from the generous hands of the Creator and those which are the result of the activity of human beings, called to cooperate in the work of creation through their intelligence and labour. Moreover, all human beings need a share in those goods in order to reach their fulness. It

is thus all the more painful to note how many millions of people are excluded from the table of creation.

*For this reason I earnestly invite you to concentrate your attention on this year commemorating the Fifth Centenary of the Evangelization of the American Continent, which in no way should remain a mere historical anniversary. Our vision of the past must be complemented by a look around us and towards the future (cf. Centesimus Annus, 3). We must try to discern the mysterious presence of God in history, where he engages us and calls us to give him definite responses. Five centuries of the Gospel's presence on that continent have still not produced a fair distribution of the goods of the earth. And this is all the more painful when we think of the poorest of the poor: *the indigenous groups, and together with them many campesinos*, offended in their dignity by being excluded from the exercise of even their most fundamental rights, which also are a part of the goods destined for all. The situation of these brothers and sisters of ours cries out for justice from the Lord. Consequently, a generous and bold reform of economic structures and agrarian policies needs to be fostered, so as to ensure well-being and the conditions required for the rightful exercise of their human rights by the indigenous groups and the great masses of the poor who have so often been unjustly treated.*

For those people and for all the dispossessed of the world - for we are all children of God, brothers and sisters to each other, and the goods of creation are meant for us all - we must work hard and without delay so that they can occupy their proper place at the table of creation. In the season of Lent and also during campaigns of solidarity - Advent campaigns and Weeks for the poor - a clear awareness that it is the Creator's will to place the goods of creation at the service of everyone should inspire work for the genuine and complete development of the person and of all people.

In a spirit of prayer and commitment we must listen carefully to the words: "*Behold, I am at the door and knock*" (Rev. 3:20). Yes, it is the Lord himself who knocks gently at the heart of each one of us, without forcing us, waiting patiently for us to open so that he can come in and sit down at table with us. But, again, we must never forget that - according to the central message of the Gospel - Jesus calls us through each of our brothers and sisters, and our personal response will serve as the criterion for being put at his right hand with the blessed or at his left with the accursed: "I was hungry... I was thirsty... I was a stranger... I was naked... sick... in prison" (Mt 25:34ff.).

Praying fervently that the Lord will enlighten the efforts of all on behalf of the poorest and most needy, I bless you with all my heart, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

From the Vatican, 29 June 1991

JOHN PAUL II

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