



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC VISIT TO CANADA

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO MEMBERS OF THE FISHING COMMUNITY**

Newfoundland

Wednesday, 12 September 1984

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,
dear People of Newfoundland,*

1. It was from their fishing boats on the Sea of Galilee that Jesus called Simon Peter and James and John to share his mission. As the Gospel reminds us, Jesus spent much of his time in the ordinary circumstances of daily life, sharing the hopes and hardships of the people. This is why I am immensely pleased to be with you, the members of the fishing community. I extend a special greeting to you, Archbishop Penney, and to those of you who are the spiritual leaders of the other Churches and Communions represented here. The joyful event that unites us is the blessing of the Fishing Fleet here at Flatrock.

It is in this context that I have come today to express my solidarity with you, and *to profess with you faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*. This faith of ours, in the Eternal Son of God made man, offers an uplifting message for the whole human community. Our faith in Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, opens up before us a vision of great hope and, at the same time, it speaks to all of us about Christ's commandment to love and serve one another.

2. Long before they settled on these shores, Europeans fished these banks. From fishing villages along these coasts you and your ancestors have set out in all kinds of weather to wrest a living from the sea, often at the risk of your lives. Your wives and families have shared the uncertainty and fear that your way of life involves. In Christian pain and hope they have mourned the loss of many loved ones that did not return. As a Newfoundland poet wrote: "It took the sea a thousand

years, / A thousand years to trace / The granite features of this cliff, / In crag and scarp and base. / It took the sea an hour one night, / An hour of storm to place / The sculpture of these granite seams / Upon a woman's face".

3. Today your lives are touched by another kind of insecurity, coming not from the sea but from the changed conditions in the fishing industry and in the world economy. Not even Canada with its immense natural resources and limited population has escaped the effects of world-wide economic uncertainty. Here in Newfoundland, even more than in other parts of Canada, you feel the heavy burden of unemployment, which has settled like a blight on the hopes of so many, especially the young, who experience in their own lives how the absence of rewarding employment affects the many aspects of their existence and of society, destroying prospects for the future, affecting the livelihood of families and disturbing the social fabric of the community.

In my Encyclical "*Laborem Exercens*" I have emphasized "the fact that human work is a key, probably the essential key, to the whole social question". Men and women are meant to contribute by their work to the building up of the human community, and so to realize their full human stature as co-creators with God and co-builders of his Kingdom. Prolonged failure to find meaningful employment represents an affront to the dignity of the individual, for which no social assistance can fully compensate. The human costs of such unemployment, especially the havoc it brings to family life, have frequently been deplored by the Canadian Bishops. I join with them in appealing to those in positions of responsibility, and to all involved, to work together to find appropriate solutions to the problems at hand, including a re-structuring of the economy, so that human needs be put before mere financial gain. The social doctrine of the Church requires us to emphasize the primacy of the human person in the productive process, the primacy of people over things.

4. Canada has been called the breadbasket of the world, and it was one of the world's largest exporters of fish before the recent recession. It is a cruel paradox that many of you who could be engaged in the production of food are in financial distress here, while at the same time hunger, chronic malnutrition and the threat of starvation afflict millions of people elsewhere in the world.

With careful stewardship, the sea will continue to offer its harvest. However, during the last few years the means of processing and distributing food have become more technically sophisticated. The fishing industry has also been concentrated more and more in the hands of fewer and fewer people. Around the globe more and more small or family fishing concerns lose their financial independence to the larger and capital intensive enterprises. Large industrial fishing companies run the risk of losing contact with the fishermen and their personal and family needs. They are exposed to the temptation of responding only to the forces of the marketplace, thus lacking at times sufficient financial incentive to maintain production. Such a development would put the security and distribution of the world's food supply into ever greater jeopardy, if food production becomes controlled by the profit motive of a few rather than by the needs of the many.

5. The current economic situation, especially with regard to fishing, demands courageous decisions in order to overcome all negative consequences. Our Christian view of man and what constitutes his good must be the guiding principles in looking for alternate solutions. The promotion of cooperatives of fishermen, collective agreements between workers and management, some form of joint ownership or partnership - these are some of the possible solutions that would aim at ensuring that the workers have a voice in the decision-making affecting their own lives and the lives of their families.

In a world of growing interdependence, the responsible stewardship of all the earth's resources, and especially food, requires long-range planning at the different levels of government, in cooperation with industry. It also requires effective international agreements on trade. It must take account the problem of food-aid and aid to development, and be responsive to those in need.

6. My dear friends: hard work and a strong sense of family and community have sustained you in the past in your upright Christian lives. Above all, your faith in Jesus Christ and the hope that it generates in you are at the basis of all your aspirations for a better future. For this reason, in the efforts and struggles of daily living you can say with Saint Paul: "To this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God" (*1 Tim. 4, 10*).

Avec vos pasteurs et vos animateurs spirituels rassemblés ici autour de moi, je prie pour vous tous et pour vos familles. Que Dieu notre Père rende fécond le travail de vos mains! Que son divin Fils, notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ, lui qui multiplie les pains et les poissons pour nourrir la foule affamée, étende l'horizon de votre solidarité fraternelle à tous ses frères et sœurs! Que l'Esprit Saint vive dans vos cœurs et vous remplisse de sa paix, aujourd'hui et à jamais!

Let us never forget, dear people of Newfoundland, the values that Christ taught from Peter's boat on the Sea of Galilee and throughout all his life. And let us heed the words of the Apostle Paul: "Let everything you do be done in love" (*1 Cor. 16, 14*).

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