



The Holy See

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MEETING WITH THE WORLD OF LABOUR

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Bachilleres College, State of Chihuahua, Ciudad Juárez

Wednesday, 17 February 2016

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I wanted to meet with you here in this land of Juárez, because of the special relationship this city has with the world of labour. I am grateful not only for your words of welcome and for your testimonies, which reveal the anxieties, joys and hopes of your lives, but also for this opportunity to share and reflect together. Anything we can do to foster dialogue, encounter, and the search for better alternatives and opportunities is already an accomplishment to be valued and highlighted. And there are two words that I want to underline: dialogue and encounter. Never tire of pursuing dialogue. Wars gradually come about due to a lack of talking and encounter. Obviously more needs to be done than dialogue and encounter, but today we do not have the luxury of missing any chance to encounter, any chance to discuss, confront or explore. This is the only way we will be able to build for tomorrow, to create sustainable relationships capable of providing the needed framework that, little by little, will rebuild the social bonds so damaged by a lack of communication and by a lack of the minimal respect necessary for a healthy coexistence. So I thank you, and I hope that this occasion may serve to build the future. May it be a good opportunity to forge the Mexico that its people and children deserve.

I would like to dwell on this latter point. Here today there are various workers' organizations and

representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and business associations. At first sight they could be considered as adversaries, but they are united by the same responsibility: seeking to create employment opportunities which are dignified and truly beneficial for society and especially for the young people of this land. One of the greatest scourges for young people is the lack of opportunities for study and for sustainable and profitable work, which would permit them to work for the future. In many cases — many cases — this lack of opportunity leads to situations of poverty and rejection. This poverty and rejection then becomes the best breeding ground for the young to fall into the cycle of drug trafficking and violence. It is a luxury which today we cannot afford; we cannot allow the present and future of Mexico to be isolated and abandoned. And for this to happen, dialogue, speaking face to face, and work opportunities are needed to help forge a constructive path ahead.

Unfortunately, the times we live in have imposed the paradigm of economic utility as the starting point for personal relationships. The prevailing mentality, everywhere, advocates for the greatest possible profits, immediately and at any cost. This not only causes the ethical dimension of business to be lost, but it also forgets that the best investment we can make is in people, in individual persons and in families. The best investment is creating opportunities. The prevailing mentality puts the flow of people at the service of the flow of capital, resulting in many cases in the exploitation of employees as if they were objects to be used, discarded and thrown out (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 123). God will hold us accountable for the slavery of our day, and we must do everything to make sure that these situations do not happen again. The flow of capital cannot decide the flow and life of people. For this reason I liked that aspiration which was expressed through dialogue, talking face to face.

When faced with tenets of the Church's Social Doctrine, it is objected frequently: "These teachings would have us be charitable organizations or have us transform our businesses into philanthropic institutions". We have heard this criticism. The only aspiration of the Church's Social Doctrine is to guard over the integrity of people and social structures. Every time that, for whatever reason, this integrity is threatened or reduced to a consumer good, the Church's Social Doctrine will be a prophetic voice to protect us all from being lost in the seductive sea of ambition. Every time that a person's integrity is violated, society, in a certain sense, begins to decline. And this Social Doctrine of the Church is against no one, but in favour of all. Every sector has the obligation of looking out for the good of all; we are all in the same boat. We all have to struggle to make sure that work is a humanizing moment which looks to the future; that it is a space for building up society and each person's participation in it. This attitude not only provides an immediate improvement, but in the long run it will also transform society into a culture capable of promoting a dignified space for everyone. This culture, often born out of tension, is creating a new style of relationships, a new kind of nation.

What kind of world do we want to leave our children? I believe that the vast majority of us can agree. This is precisely our horizon, our goal, and we have to come together and work for this. It is

always good to think about what I would like to leave my children; it is also a good way to think of others' children. What kind of Mexico do you want to leave your children? Do you want to leave them the memory of exploitation, of insufficient pay, of workplace harassment, of trafficking in slave labour? Or do you want to leave them a culture which recalls dignified labour, proper lodging, and land to be worked? The three "L's": Labour, Lodging, Land. What type of culture do we want for those who will come after us? What air will they breathe? An air tainted by corruption, violence, insecurity and suspicion, or, on the contrary, an air capable of generating — and the word is crucial — generating alternatives, renewal and change? To generate is to be co-creators with God. This, naturally, involves much effort.

I know that the issues raised are not easy, but it is worse to leave the future in the hands of corruption, brutality and the lack of equity. I know it is often not easy to bring all parties together in negotiations, but it is worse, and we end up doing more harm, when there is a lack of negotiations and appreciation. An old labourer manager, a very honest man, who left this world having earned every penny due to him and who never took advantage of others, once said to me: "Each time we had to sit down at the negotiating table, I knew that I had to lose something in order to make us all win something". This is a good philosophy coming from the world of labour. I know it is not easy to get along in an increasingly competitive world, but it is worse to allow the competitive world to ruin the destiny of the people. Slaves. Profit and capital are not a good over and above the human person; they are at the service of the common good. When the common good is used only at the service of profit and capital, this has a name: it is called exclusion, and through it the throwaway culture gets stronger and stronger. Throwaway and exclusion.

I began by thanking you for this opportunity to be together. Yesterday, one of the young people in the Morelia Stadium offered a testimony and said that this world robs us of the capacity to dream, and this is so true. This world does sometimes take away our ability to dream, our ability to be grateful. When young boys or girls only see their parents at weekends because the latter set off very early to work and then return late at night during the week, this is what we mean by a throwaway culture. I want to invite you to dream, to dream of a Mexico where a father and mother can have time to play with their children. You can achieve this through dialogue, speaking face to face, negotiating, and losing out at times so that all can win. I invite you to dream of a Mexico that your children deserve; a Mexico where no one is first, second, or fourth; a Mexico where each sees in the other the dignity of a child of God. May our Lady of Guadalupe, who made herself known to St Juan Diego, and revealed how the seemingly abandoned were her privileged witnesses, help you all, whatever your profession, whatever your work, to take up this task of dialogue, face to face discussion, and encounter. Thank you.