



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
AI PARTECIPANTI AL CONGRESSO
DEL CONSIGLIO EUROPEO DEI GIOVANI AGRICOLTORI****

Giovedì, 16 marzo 1989

Mr. President, Dear Friends,

1. In welcoming you here, I am happy to offer you my warmest greetings and thank you for your kind visit.

During these days you are celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the European Council of Young Farmers, under the auspices of the competent institutions of the European Economic Community, at the headquarters of the Food and Agricultural Organization at Rome. Your meeting affords you the opportunity of a common reflection on the path that has been travelled and for the perspectives opening in Europe by the new dispositions which will take effect in 1993. I want to assure you of my interest in the themes which you are discussing together.

2. Indeed, the analysis of the current situation of agriculture, within the context of the community's agricultural policy, leads you to consider the whole of your activity in the professional field, or rather of your social milieu, today marked by considerable changes which have taken place in recent decades.

In this brief conversation it is not my intention to mention the often difficult stages of a European construction in which the farmers are at the forefront. However, I know that the adoption of these undoubtedly necessary norms and directives has created many problems for farmers; the generations before you had to face rapid technological and economic change, while your generation experiences real difficulties in the exercise of a profession which you love. Facing your experiences will allow you to weigh better the value of renouncing certain forms of individualism

and nationalism, and better to situate the objective of an organic continental unity which must be forged for the good of all, and open also to other regions of the world.

3. You also intend to delineate the functions of youth farm unions, taking into consideration the coming liberalization of the Common Market. In fact, the cultural and educational contribution of professional and trade union organizations seems important and determining; they are 'a constructive factor of social order and solidarity' (Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, n. 20). The strengthening of European unity will depend to a great extent on the moral and spiritual cohesion of the individuals and peoples that comprise it. When I presented the Christian teaching on work, I particularly recalled that it is necessary »to proclaim and promote the dignity of work, of all work but especially of agricultural work, in which man so eloquently 'subdues' the earth he has received as a gift from God" (ibid., n. 21). I hope that your organizations may help young farmers to find in their profession the satisfaction of fulfilling in security a human task that benefits and is respected by everyone.

4. The third topic of your consideration during this meeting in Rome is still more definitely situated within an international perspective. You are preparing for the Sixth International Congress which will take place in Brazil in December. You will be faced with problems of interdependence in production and trade; you will more clearly affirm anew the urgent need to take into consideration not only economic factors, but also cultural, political and religious ones, that is, to raise this interdependence to the level of a moral category, as I requested in the Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (cf. n. 38).

At the threshold of the year 2000, you set out to expand the frontiers of the solidarity of Europeans beyond the limits of your continent, so as to establish closer and more fruitful ties between the north and south of the planet, among the countries gifted with more productive modern farming and the countries which do not enjoy the same natural, technological and economic possibilities. This solidarity, you know, will have its full significance only if it is exercised on the human level, if it translates the primacy of the human being into all economic activity. The Church appreciates everything that all governmental and nongovernmental international organizations are doing in that regard "at the service of the societies, economies and cultures of the whole world" (ibid., n. 43).

5. Dear young farmers, last autumn I had the joy of speaking to the European Parliament and of expressing my esteem for, and encouragement to, those who represent your twelve nations at that level.

To you also I would like to recall three fields of action which I mentioned at Strasbourg and which seem to me are essential for the path of a united Europe: first of all, reconcile man with creation, taking care to preserve nature's integrity, balance and resources (you are the first to understand the need for this); reconcile man with his equals, accepting one another in the diversity of their traditions within the European continent and being open to the spiritual riches of other continents;

reconcile man with himself, working to reshape an integral and total vision of the human person (cf. Address to the European Parliament, 11 October 1988 [Eng. ed. 21 Nov.19881, n. 12).

I am sure that with your youthful sensitivity, the breadth of your vision and your confidence in the future, you will be able to respond generously to these appeals.

In that hope I invoke upon you, your families, those whom you represent, and upon your nations, the Lord's blessing.

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