



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ITALIAN
CHRISTIAN WORKERS' ASSOCIATIONS**

Saturday, 27 April 2002

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Italian Christian Workers' Associations,

1. I am pleased to meet you again on the occasion of your association's organizational and planning conference. I cordially greet you all, starting with your President, Mr Luigi Bobba, whom I thank for his noble words highlighting the importance of today's meeting.

In the face of the new scenarios and rapid social changes, you intend to renew your promise to follow up as fully as possible on the ancient and ever new mission of evangelizing the world of work and social life. You want to set about it with an attitude of confident openness to the future.

Thus you accept the invitation which set the seal on the Jubilee: "Let us go forward in hope! ... our steps must quicken as we travel the highways of the world" (*Novo Millennio ineunte*, n. 58).

For this reason, ACLI leaders and members are called today to be active supporters of the Church's social teaching, which is the best way to respond to the great challenges of contemporary society. Study the Church's social teaching, announce it in full, dare to formulate concrete plans that highlight *the central place of the human person*. Make this precious inheritance bear fruit by renewing your traditional fidelity to the Church, to workers, to the values of a sound democracy; and always be determined in your undertaking to defend the human being: his dignity, his rights and his transcendent dimension.

2. This means working to build "a society of free work, of enterprise and of participation" (*Centesimus annus*, n. 35), giving rise to new, shared prospects of authentic development.

For this reason, as I had the chance to stress on the occasion of the Jubilee of Workers, there is an urgent need for a global coalition *that gives priority to the dignity of work*. This entails doing what is possible to create effective job opportunities for all, while guaranteeing each one his proper remuneration. It will also be necessary to look at the ways in which work is done and to ensure that they neither conflict with the basic tenor of life of the person or the family nor prevent the careful progression of each one's plan of life. The current rapid changes taking place in systems of productivity must be guided by intelligence and constant attention to the needs of the less endowed geographical areas and social groups.

3. A courageous and determined pledge to this view can only strengthen *the role of the family*, the first school where we learn those social virtues that are the soul of human development. Then society will need *social policies that fit the family*, training and work policies which aim at keeping together time of work with the time required to care for the family.

Very important is the decision *to invest in the dialogue among the generations*, forming and cultivating young people who can give savour and light to our society as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. This is why formation and cultural advancement are an essential part of the ACLI mission.

Lastly, attention to bolstering the fabric of solidarity and social life naturally leads you to *a European and global openness*. In this perspective, I urge you to follow creatively the debated issues on the process of writing a constitution that is under way in the European Union and on the expansion of the Union itself, giving a voice to Christian inspiration and to the reasons for free social groupings.

4. Dear brothers and sisters, I know that you are involved in *many initiatives of leadership and service* and are especially concerned to guide those who have less education and means. Today you are called to extend the bounds of your social action to deal with the new phenomena of immigration and globalization.

In particular the phenomenon of globalization, which is *the new name of the social question*, requires that no effort be spared to make the forces in this context converge towards an authentic spirit of brotherhood. The close connection between the local and global dimensions requires, particularly of the more privileged countries, *more demanding forms of responsibility* towards developing countries. Such responsibility should be urgently manifested in terms of preserving the *earth's resources* and *safeguarding creation*. Here is the meaning of the constant invitation to "globalize solidarity".

To work with these convictions will enable you will achieve *that fidelity to the Church* which I mentioned at the beginning: the "globalization of solidarity" is actually a direct consequence of the universal charity that is the soul of the Gospel. You will also be *faithful to the human person*; you

will continue to remind him of his duties and to promote his rights in the midst of the new conditions developing in the world economy. You will do so without failing in your *fidelity to the democratic values* that have inspired the Association since it began.

5. The time is ripe for *lay* faithful who can recognize the hope and anguish of the persons of our time in the social reality and in the world of work. *We need lay people* who can witness with their lives to the "values of the kingdom", even when they must go against the tide of the world's logic. It is time for *lay people* who want to witness in a social milieu permeated by so many false hopes to the hope that does not disappoint (cf. Rom 5,5).

Such a strong "missionary" endeavour presupposes an equally strong *contemplative effort*. You know that Christian contemplation takes nothing from our involvement in history; it invites to it. At the beginning of this millennium, the Pope urges you to be *a living proclamation of the constant presence of Christ* who walks with humanity at all times.

With these wishes, that I make during the Easter season and a few days before the Feast of St Joseph the Worker, I warmly impart to you and to your families my Blessing.