



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI
TO THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE
«INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR»***

Wednesday, 6 November 1974

We very willingly greet in you, this morning, the representative of the commitment assumed by the United Nations for the "International Women's Year", proclaimed for 1975; this meeting offers us the opportunity to express the goodwill and attention with which we wish to follow this initiative.

In fact, the initiative does not find the Church inattentive to the problem or lacking in a clear desire to solve it. On the contrary: in the contemporary effort to promote the advancement of woman in society, the Church has already recognized "a sign of the times", and has seen in it a call of the Spirit. The Study Commission which we set up, accepting a wish expressed by the 1971 Synod, has precisely received the mandate to study, in a comparison of the aspirations of today's world and the enlightening doctrine of the Church, the full participation of woman in the community life of the Church and of society.

The programme of International Women's Year, well summed up in the theme "equality, development and peace", is thus not extraneous to the most lively interest of the Church herself.

Equality can only be found in its essential foundation, which is the dignity of the human person, man and woman, in their filial relationship with God, of whom they are the visible image.

But this does not exclude the distinction, in unity, and the specific contribution of woman to the full development of society, according to her proper and personal vocation.

In this way the woman of today will be able to become more conscious of her rights and duties, and will be able to contribute not only to the elevation of herself but also to a qualitative progress of human social life, "in development and peace".

And since the fundamental and life-giving cell of human society remains the family, according to the very plan of God, woman will preserve and develop, principally in the family community, in full co-responsibility with man, her task of welcoming, giving and raising life, in a growing development of its potential powers.

To all those collaborating in the preparation of International Women's Year in the most worthy purpose of strengthening ever more the dignity and mission of woman, we indicate as a solid point of reference the figure of the Blessed Virgin. As we stated in our recent Exhortation *Marialis Cultus*, our age is called upon to verify and to "compare its anthropological ideas and the problems springing therefrom with the figure of the Virgin Mary as presented by the Gospel. The reading of the divine Scriptures, carried out under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with the discoveries of the human sciences and the different situations in the world today being taken into account, will help us to see how Mary can be considered a mirror of the expectations of the men and women of our time . . . (she) offers them the perfect model of the disciple of the Lord: the disciple who builds up the earthly and temporal city while being a diligent pilgrim towards the heavenly and eternal city, the disciple who works for that justice which sets free the oppressed and for that charity which assists the needy; but above all, the disciple who is the active witness of that love which builds up Christ in people's hearts" (*Marialis Cultus*, 37).

And with this bright vision before our eyes, we wish the undertaking harmonious and profitable work, upon which we invoke the intercession of the Mother of God and the fullness of divine blessings.

**Insegnamenti di Paolo VI, vol. XII, p.1054-1055.*

L'Osservatore Romano, 7.11.1974, p.1.

Paths to Peace p.380-381.