



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS XII  
TO A MEETING OF THE DELEGATES OF THE  
EUROPEAN NATIONS TO THE FAO\***

*Sabato, 21 febbraio 1948*

We are deeply touched by your presence here, Gentlemen, dedicated as you are to a social task which arises from the conviction and awareness of universal brotherhood. You have also chosen to show Us, in the most delicate way, that you recognize and appreciate in the common Father of all Christians, a heart whose affection and paternal concern extends to all of needy and suffering humanity regardless of nation or background.

We are pleased to acknowledge and praise the depth of vision which inspired the United Nations to set up an institution especially to deal with food and agriculture problems. We praise also the efficiency which characterizes its management and its methodology, the wisdom and prudence with which it oversees its task. This is done in such a way that each nation, by collaborating with the others, can better attend to the well-being and needs of all through growth, development and the best use of each country's resources.

By working to increase and balance out the production and distribution of all food and agricultural products, in order to foster general overall economic progress, you are contributing towards freeing nations from the miseries of poverty and from the humiliation of having to beg for alms. You are enabling them all to be, reciprocally and in solidarity, beneficiaries of and benefactors to one another.

It is only right to concentrate on bettering the living conditions of rural peoples. By their labour these have been the diligent providers to and even the agents of the entire community during years of prosperity. Yet, they are the first victims of penury caused by unpredictable crops and weather, the ravages of war, the uncertainties and complications of the economy which have left the land sterile and impossible to cultivate for long periods in many regions.

How could we not also rejoice, Gentlemen, in knowing that you wish to take the principles of Catholic social doctrine into consideration? In fact, there is no opposition nor contradiction between Catholic social doctrine and natural social doctrine. Catholic social doctrine only takes into account, in the application of natural social doctrine, the eternal destiny of human beings. In this regard, we can apply to the Church the words of Christ Himself when He affirmed that He had come not to destroy the law, not to change it one iota but to perfect it. If then, the Church, like its Founder and Head, proclaims that man does not live by bread alone, the Church also like Him has the deepest and most loving compassion for the vast multitudes who are hungry.

We wish to express the interest We have in your work. With all our heart, we entreat God to bless it most abundantly.

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*\*Paths to Peace, p.294.*