



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO A GROUP OF CHRISTIAN WORKERS

Saturday, 9 December 1978

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, workers of Montedison, the Alfa Romeo Company, Pirelli, "Corriere della Sera", and other Companies, belonging to the "Groups of commitment and Christian presence", welcome to the house of the common Father!

1. I know that you have been waiting for this Audience with the Pope for some time. You already wished to meet Pope John Paul I, of venerated memory, who—I am told—was a familiar figure in the large factory at Porto Marghera. The Lord called him to Himself after such a short, but so intense a pontificate as to leave immense emotion in the world. And here you have the new Pope, who is particularly happy to receive today this great array of representatives from Italian Industry, qualified and well-known all over the world. I greet you all heartily and thank you for the joy your visit gives me.

2. As you know, I, too, have been a worker: for a short period of my life, during the last world conflict I, too, had direct experience of factory work. I know, therefore, what the commitment of daily toil in the employment of others means. I know how heavy and monotonous it is; I know the needs of the workers and their just demands and legitimate aspirations. And I know how necessary it is that work should

never be alienating and frustrating, but should always correspond to man's superior spiritual dignity.

3. You know, too, how much the Church, following the example of the divine Master, has always esteemed, protected and defended man and his work, from the condemnation of slavery to the systematic presentation of the "Christian social doctrine", from the teaching of evangelical charity as the supreme commandment, to the great social Encyclicals, such as Leo XIII's *Rerum*

Novarum, Pius XI's Quadragesimo Anno, John XXIII's Mater et Magistra and Paul VI's Populorum Progressio. In the midst of the trials and tribulations of human history, in the dramatic process of the social and political settlement of peoples, the Church has always defended the worker, upholding the urgency of real social justice, together with Christian charity, in an atmosphere of freedom, mutual respect and brotherhood. In this connection, I would just like to recall Pope John XXIII's Broadcast Message to Polish workers, on 26 May 1963, a few days before his death: "We will spare no effort, as long as we live, in order that there may be solicitude and care for you. Have confidence in the love of the Church and entrust yourselves to her tranquilly, in the certainty that her thoughts are thoughts of peace and not of affliction".

4. And now what shall I say to you in particular, Christian workers, which may serve as a memory of our meeting?

In the first place, it is my earnest wish that work may be a real right for every human person. Today the national and international situation is so difficult and complicated, that it is not possible to oversimplify. But, since we know that work is life, serenity, commitment, interest, meaning, we must wish everyone to have it.

He who has a job, feels he is useful, sound, engaged in something which gives his own life value. To be without a job is psychologically negative and dangerous, particularly for the young and for those who have a family to support. Therefore, while we must thank the Lord if we have work, we must also feel the grief and distress of the unemployed and, as far as is in our power, endeavour to meet these painful situations. Words are not enough! It is necessary to help concretely, in a Christian way! While I appeal to those responsible for society, I also address each of you directly: commit yourselves, you, too, in order that everyone may find work!

In the second place, I urge the implementation of social justice. Here, too, there are many problems, enormous ones; but I appeal to the conscience of everyone, employers and workers. Rights and duties are on both sides and, for society to be able to keep itself in the balance of peace and common prosperity, everyone must make an effort to fight and overcome selfishness. This is certainly a difficult undertaking, but the Christian must make a point of being just in everything and with everyone, both in remunerating and protecting work and in spending his own strength. He must be, in fact, a witness to Christ everywhere, and therefore also at work.

Finally, I call upon you to sanctify work. Work is not always easy, pleasant, satisfying; it may sometimes be heavy, not esteemed, not well paid, even dangerous. It is then necessary to remember that all work is collaboration with God to perfect the nature he created, and it is a service to brothers. It is necessary, therefore, to work with love and out of love! Then one will always be content and serene, and even if work tires, one takes up the cross together with Jesus Christ and bears the fatigue courageously.

Beloved workers!

Know that the Pope loves you, follows you in your factories and your workshops, keeps you in his heart! Keep high the name of „Christian" in your places of work, together with that of your, or rather our, Italy!

With my Apostolic Blessing.

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