

THE DIGNITY OF WORK

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22. CHRISTIAN FAITH ENNOBLES HUMAN WORK¹

Work and Society.

I want to thank you first of all for having come to this meeting, which, taking place on the day of St. Barbara, the patroness of all those work in mines, is an evident sign of your Christian faith, as well as of your devotion to Peter's Successor.

Therefore I cordially greet you and welcome you to this house, that of the common Pastor of the Church, all the more reason it must open to you, dear miners. You, in fact, represent a class of people whose work is among the heaviest of all, and furthermore you remind me of the work that I myself carried out for some years in my youth.

I know from experience that it is a hard job, even if improvements in work techniques have certainly been made in the course of the years; I can therefore understand your problems and I assure you that I am close to you in affection.

Above all I wish to tell you that if the common saying that work ennoble man is true, it is also true that only Christian faith can ennoble work itself and even make it more human. Therefore the exhortation I address to you is to renew and strengthen your full adherence to Christ, man's Redeemer and our Lord. Only he enables us to harness all our energies to the construction of a society which will be new only if founded, finally, on respect, and above all on mutual love.

¹ This material was delivered as an address on December 4, 1980 in Rome, to miners and managers of S. A. Solvay and Co. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, January 19, 1981, pp. 17-18.

23.

MANAGERS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO RESPECT THE MORAL DIMENSION OF THE ENTERPRISE²

Christian Witness/Mission, Collaboration with God, Common Good, Community of Persons, Dialogue and Cooperation, Dignity of Work, Dominion over the Earth, Economic Laws and Profits, Entrepreneurship, Gospel of Work, Human Rights/Dignity, Justice, Leisure, Meaning of Work, Solidarity, Unemployment, Work and Family, Work and Society, Work and the Worker.

The Church believes it has an unavoidable duty in the social field to help “fortify the human community according to the divine law,”³ by recalling the dignity and rights of workers, by stigmatizing situations where such rights are violated and by favoring exchanges leading to authentic progress for man and society.

Work corresponds to God’s design and will. The first pages of Genesis present creation to us as the work of God, God’s labor. So, God calls on man to work, so as to be like him. Hence, work is not something off on the side. Even less is it a curse from heaven. On the contrary, it is a primordial blessing from the creator, an activity permitting the individual to realize himself and to offer a service to society. In addition, he will have a higher reward, for “your toil is not vain when it is done in the Lord.”⁴

Gospel of Work

But it was Jesus who delivered the most thorough gospel of work, he who was the son of God made man and a man of manual work, subject to hard effort. He gave the most part of his earthly life to work as a craftsman and incorporated that same work into his task of salvation.

For my part, during these four years of my pontificate I have unceasingly

² This material was delivered as an address on November 6, 1982 in Barcelona, Spain, to Spanish workers and businessmen. The translation was taken from *Origins*, November 18, 1982, vol. 12: no. 23, pp. 374-376.

³ *Gaudium et spes*, n. 42.

⁴ 1 Cor 15:58.

proclaimed the centrality of man in my encyclicals and catechesis, insisting on his primacy over things and on the importance of the subjective dimension in work, based on the dignity of the human person.

In fact, inasmuch as he is a person man is the center of creation, for he alone has been created in God's image and likeness. He has been called to "subdue" the earth⁵ with the perspicacity of his intelligence and the activity of his hands. He turns himself into an artificer in work—both manual and intellectual—and communicates his own dignity to his work.

Friends and brother workers, the Christian concept of work sees it as a call to collaborate with God's power and love, maintaining man's life and making it more in accord with his design. When understood in this way, work is not a biological necessity for the sake of subsistence, but a moral duty. It is an act of love and it turns into joy, the deep joy of giving oneself through work to one's own family and to others, the intimate joyousness of offering oneself to God and of serving one's brothers, even though such giving entails sacrifices. Thus Christian work has a paschal meaning.

The logical consequence is that we all have the duty to do our work well. If we wish to realize ourselves properly, we may not avoid our duty or perform our work in a mediocre way, without interest, just to get it over with.

A Christian Concept of Work

Your tenacious hard work and your feeling of responsibility make us understand, dear brothers and sisters, how far from the Christian concept of work—and from a correct vision of the social order—are certain attitudes of lack of interest, of waste of time, and resources. These attitudes are spreading in our day, both in the public and in the private sector. Not to mention the phenomenon of absenteeism. This social ill not only affects production, but offends the hopes and sufferings of those who are desperately looking for work.

The church wants, through fidelity to the good news of salvation, to be present for all, but especially for the poor and oppressed, to be present in the effort which drives believers and men of good will toward attaining a truly human society, and to do this by recalling teachings coming from the Lord's mouth.

⁵ Gen. 1:28.

Work is certainly a good of man and for man. In this respect, I emphasized in the encyclical *Laborem exercens* that “work is for man and not man for work.”⁶ The marrow of Christian social doctrine on work is centered there: one does not achieve a correct concept of work except in strict dependence on the right concept of man.

Labor and hard work constitute a duty and a service to the family cell, to its life, unity, development and perfecting. Therefore, “the reason for the family”— I said to Polish workers three years ago—“is one of the fundamental factors determining the economy and policy of work.”

When rightly understood, the naturalness of all work not only respects the demands of the common good but also directs and transforms all work activity into cooperation affecting the good of all, and so enriching the patrimony of the human family.

The Spiritual Problem of Unemployment

What I have already said leads me to touch briefly on a problem which is not exclusive to Spain, but which affects it to a large degree. I mean unemployment.

The lack of work goes against the “right to work,” understood—in the universal context of the rest of the fundamental rights—as a primary necessity, and not a privilege, to satisfy the vital needs of human existence through labor activity.

It is an urgent problem and one which must push each Christian to assume his or her responsibility in the name of the Gospel, and its message of justice, solidarity and love.

Prolonged unemployment gives rise to insecurity, lack of initiative, frustration, irresponsibility, and lack of trust in society and in oneself. Capacities for personal development are atrophied, enthusiasm and love for the good are lost, family crises and desperate personal situations break out, and so there is an easy fall—especially on the part of the young—into drugs, alcoholism, and crime.

It would be false and deceptive to consider this distressing problem—which has become endemic throughout the world—as the product of passing circumstances or as a purely economic and socio-political problem. It is really an ethical problem, a spiritual problem, because it is a symptom of a moral disorder existing in society when the hierarchy of values is broken.

⁶ *Laborem exercens*, n. 6.

Responsibility of the State, Employers and Workers

Through its social magisterium the Church recalls that the ways to a just solution of this grave problem demand a revision of the economic order as a whole. Comprehensive planning of economic production, not simply planning by sectors, is needed. The correct and rational organization of work is necessary, not only on the national level, but also on the international level. The solidarity of all working men is needed for this.

The state must not resign itself to having to tolerate the chronic high unemployment. The creation of new jobs must constitute for it a priority as much economic as political. But businessmen and workers together have to help in overcoming the lack of jobs. The former have to keep up the production rate of their factories, the latter should attend to their work with due efficiency and be disposed through solidarity to give up “double” jobs and recourse to systematic use of overtime, which reduces the possibility of providing work to others.

Need for Conversion

An economy that is at the service of man must be created by all possible means. To overcome clashes between private and collective interests, to overcome egoisms in the struggle for subsistence, a real change of attitude is demanded of all, a change in lifestyle, minds and wills, a conversion of man to the truth about man.

I have dwelt particularly on this matter because it is so topical. I know that you are preoccupied by many other problems concerning wages, health conditions at work, protection against accidents at work, the role of labor unions, management and profit sharing, and proper protection of workers coming from other places.

Labor Unites Humanity

These are complex problems and they are vital for you. But I would repeat once again: Do not forget that the primary characteristic of labor is that of uniting humanity. “This is what its social power consists in: the power to construct a community.”⁷ Base yourselves on that and on the great Christian values which enliven you. Take your serenity and confidence with you to your places of work. Brighten

⁷ *Laborem exercens*, n. 20.

your surroundings with charity and hope. In this way it will be easier for you to find the right solutions.

Christian Concept of Enterprise

Allow me now, dear men and women workers of Spain, to address my words to another class of workers in Spain: businessmen, industrialists, top administrators, qualified experts in socio-economic life and backers of industrial complexes.

I greet and pay honor to you, the creators of jobs, employment, services, and job training, all of you in this dear Spain who provide work and support for a great number of men and women workers. The pope expresses his esteem and gratitude to you for the high function which you perform in service to man and society. To you, too, I proclaim the gospel of work.

And, as I invite you to reflect upon the Christian concept of enterprise, I would remind you above all that there is a deeper problem, above and beyond technical and economic aspects in which you are masters. I mean the moral dimension. Economics and technology really have no meaning unless they have reference to man, whom they must serve.

Work is actually for man, not man for work. Consequently, enterprise is for man and not man for enterprise.

An indispensable requirement for a society seeking to be a just society is that it overcome the unnatural and illogical antinomy between capital and labor, which has often been artificially sharpened by programmed class struggle. This requirement is based on the primacy of man over things. Only man—entrepreneur and worker—is subject to work and is a person. Capital is nothing but “a conjunction of things.”⁸

Give a Humane Face to Enterprise

You well know that the economic world has been suffering a great crisis for some time. The social question has turned from a class problem into a world problem. Development of energy sources and the effect of strong political interests in this field have created fresh problems. These have led to doubts about certain economic structures until recently considered indispensable and untouchable, making the running of them ever harder.

⁸ *Laborem exercens*, n. 12.

In the face of such difficulties, do not waver, do not doubt your mission. Do not fall into the temptation to give up business, to shut down, to devote yourselves egoistically to calmer and less demanding professional activities. Overcome such temptations to escape, and keep on bravely at your posts, trying to give a more humane face every day to your enterprise and keeping in mind the great contribution you make to the common good when you open up fresh work possibilities.

Major errors were committed by entrepreneurs during the development of the industrial revolution in the past. But that is no reason for failing, dear industrialists, to give public recognition and praise to your dynamism, your spirit of initiative, your iron wills, your creative capacities, and your ability to take risks. These qualities have made you key figures in economic history and in confronting the future.

Social Function of Enterprise

Because of its intrinsic dynamism, enterprise is called to perform a social function, under your drive, and this social function is profoundly ethical. It is that of contributing to the perfecting of man, of every man without any discrimination by creating conditions making work possible and enabling it to be, at the same time, work in which personal capacities can be developed. In this way effective and reasonable production of goods and services can be attained, and the worker should thus be able to feel that he is really working at something of his own.

So, an enterprise is not just an organism, a production structure. It should also transform itself into a life community, a place where a man lives with and relates with his peers, where personal development is not only allowed but encouraged as well. Is not the main enemy of the Christian sense of enterprise perhaps a certain functionalism that makes efficiency the one and only and the immediate requirement for production and work?

Work and Efficiency

Work relations are first of all relations among human beings. They cannot be measured by the sole rule of efficiency. You yourselves, dear men of enterprise here present, if you wish your professional activity to be consistent with your faith, should not conform to the rule of “making things work,” of making them be efficient, productive, and effective; seek rather that the fruits of your enterprise shall redound to the good of all through overall promotion of man and the personal perfection of those who work at your side, collaborating with you.

I know that socio-economic reality is quite complex by its very nature, to the point that it seems difficult to keep it going at moments of acute crisis, above all when the crisis takes on planetary dimensions. Nonetheless, it is precisely in such situations that it is proper to let oneself be guided by a great sense of justice and total confidence in God.

Justice

When times are difficult for all—as times of economic crisis are—workers cannot be left to their fate, especially those who, like the poor and the immigrants, have nothing but their hands to support themselves. It is proper always to remember an important principle of Catholic social teaching: “The hierarchy of values and the deep meaning of work itself demand that capital be a function of work and not work a function of capital.”⁹

Solidarity and Dialogue

And, as we end our meeting, I would say a last word to you, dear brothers and workers, and dear entrepreneurs of Spain: Live in solidarity!

The time in which we live urgently demands that, in human, national and international living together, each person and group get over its fixed positions and one-sided points of view that tend to make dialogue difficult and efforts at collaboration ineffective.

The Church is aware of the presence of tensions and even conflicts in the world of work. But it is not through antagonisms and violence that difficulties are resolved! Why reject patient and sincere dialogue? Why not have recourse to the good will of listening, of mutual respect, of efforts at honest and persevering effort together, and even acceptance of partial agreements which can after all always lead to fresh hopes?

Work has a power in itself that can give life to a community, to solidarity: the solidarity of work, which spontaneously develops among those sharing the same kind of work or profession, so as to embrace, through the interests of all individuals and groups, the common good of all society; solidarity with work, that is to say, with each man who works, which by overcoming all class egoisms and one-sided political interests makes its own the drama of the unemployed and those in hard working conditions; finally, solidarity in work, a solidarity without boundaries because it is

⁹ *Laborem exercens*, n. 23.

based on the naturalness of human work, that is to say, on the priority of the human person over things.

Such solidarity, open, dynamic and universal by nature, will never be negative. It will be a “solidarity against,” but a positive and constructive one, a “solidarity for,” for wages, for justice, for peace, for well-being, and for truth in social life.

Most beloved brothers and sisters! May your sensitivity as believers, your faith as Christians, help you to live the “good news,” the gospel of work. Be aware of your dignity as manual and intellectual workers. Collaborate in a spirit of solidarity in social problems facing you. Be the Christian leaven and presence in every part of Spain.

The church trusts in you, follows you, supports you, loves you. Be ever worthy of your religious and family traditions.

Work and Rest

Permit me to remind you particularly not to neglect your families and children because of your work. And use the festive day for rest for renewing contact with God and having healthy recreation.

24. THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS TELLS US OF THE IMPORTANCE OF WORK¹⁰

Collaboration with God, Fair Wage, Gospel of Work, Human Rights/Dignity, Humanization/Dehumanization, Justice, Unemployment, Universal Destination of Goods.

¹⁰ This material was delivered as a homily on February 4, 1985 in Trujillo, Peru, to Peruvian workers and business people. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 22, 1985, pp. 6-7.

Jesus Christ is the man of work. The Gospel text we have just heard speaks to us of human work, which for the Christian finds its greatest inspiration and model in the figure of Christ, the man of work. Before beginning his messianic activity, proclaiming the Gospel to the people, he worked for thirty years in the silent house of Nazareth. From his earliest youth Jesus learned to work, at the side of Joseph, in his carpenter's shop, and for this reason they called him "the carpenter's son."¹¹ This work of the Son of God constitutes the first and fundamental Gospel, the Gospel of Work.

Later, during his apostolic preaching, he will refer continually, especially in his parables, to the different types of human work.

Human Beings Are Saved Through Their Work

Jesus preached above all the Kingdom of God, and at the same time man's definitive destiny, union with God. But this supernatural perspective made equally evident the profound significance of human work, for it does not belong only to the temporal economic order of human society, but it also enters into the economy of divine salvation. And even though it is not only work that serves for eternal salvation, man is saved also by means of his work. This is the teaching of the Gospel that Sacred Scripture transmits to us repeatedly, in the Old as well as in the New Testament.

Today's reading, taken from St. Matthew, contains this basic doctrine in the parable of the talents. Three persons receive talents from their master: the first, five; the second, two; the third, one. The talent at that time represented a certain amount of money, capital, we would say today. Today we would call it above all the capacity, the talents for work. The first and second servants doubled what they had received. The third, on the other hand, buries his talent and does not increase its value.

These three cases speak indirectly of work. Beginning with the gifts man receives from the Creator through his parents, each one can fulfill in his life, with greater or lesser success, the mission God has entrusted to him. Always by means of work. This is the ordinary way of doubling the value of each one's talents. On the contrary, by refusing work, without work, not only is "the one talent" of which the parable speaks wasted, but any other talents received as well.

Jesus, through the parable of the talents, teaches us at least indirectly that work

¹¹ Mt 13:55.

belongs to the economy of salvation. The divine judgment on the whole of human life and the kingdom of God as a reward will depend on work. On the other hand, “the wasting of one’s talents” brings about rejection by God.

The Problem of Work is Fundamental to Christianity

The text of St. Paul from the Letter to the Thessalonians, which we heard in the first reading, can be considered an apostolic commentary on the parable of Christ and, in a certain sense, on the whole Gospel of Work, which Jesus of Nazareth taught us by his life and his words.

The Apostle warns all those who do not work, who live inordinately and in constant busyness, just as Jesus did with those who waste their talents. In addition, St. Paul gives to the recipients of the letter, the Thessalonians, an example of personal work, besides his untiring apostolic labor, “so as not to impose on any of you.”¹² This behavior of the Apostle is an indication, and must be cause for remorse, for those who do not work. For this reason he adds that “anyone who would not work should not eat.”¹³ And he commands and exhorts everyone in the Lord Jesus Christ “to earn the food they eat by working quietly.”¹⁴

In this way, the subject and problem of work appear as fundamental from the very beginning of the Christian life. They constitute a constant element of the social teaching of the Church throughout the ages, especially in the last century, when work became the center of what is called the “social question” and of all those problems related to a just social order.

Scandal to Christianity in Latin America

This problem presents itself with particularly grave and sometimes even tragic features in the regions of Latin America. The Church, in the person of her pastors, guided by the teachings of Vatican II, has been able to point it out and denounce it adequately, first at Medellin and more recently at Puebla: “In the light of faith the growing gap between rich and poor is a scandal and contradiction with being Christian. The luxury of the few becomes an insult to the poverty of the great masses. This is

¹² 2 Thes 3.8.

¹³ 2 Thes 3.10.

¹⁴ 2 Thes 3.12.

contrary to the plan of the Creator and to the honor due to him.”¹⁵ I myself recalled to your bishops “the tragedy of individual people in your rural areas and cities, daily threatened in their very subsistence, harassed by poverty, hunger, sickness, and unemployment; those unfortunate people who so often rather than living, are only surviving in subhuman situations. In these situations there is certainly no justice or the minimum dignity that human rights demand.”¹⁶

At the root of these evils of society are no doubt to be found situations and economic, social, and political structures, at times of international magnitude, which the Church denounces as “social sins.” But she knows at the same time that this is the result of the accumulation and concentration of many personal sins, which it would be necessary to avoid at their root; “sins of those who cause or support evil or who exploit it; of those who are in a position to avoid, eliminate, or at least limit certain social evils but who fail to do so out of laziness, fear or the conspiracy of silence, through secret complicity or indifference; of those who take refuge in the supposed impossibility of changing the world.”¹⁷ It is the sin of those who direct and are responsible for society, and also of those workers who do not fulfill their duties. In short, they are the sins of disharmony and egoism, of the search for power and wealth above service to others.

Church’s Social Teaching

In the face of these situations, the Church continues to be inspired by the Gospel and her own social teaching to offer her constant and determined collaboration in the cause of justice.

For this reason she wants to be close to all those unjustly treated and to be the poorest of the poor, to improve their situation in every way, not only in the economic sphere, but also in the spiritual, cultural, and moral spheres.

The poor person is one who lacks material means, but no less poor is the one who is immersed in sin; who refuses to recognize his personal dimension which goes beyond the limits of death; who does not have the freedom to think and act according to his conscience; who is subjected by the leaders of society to restrictions by which one who practices his faith is deprived of the benefits granted to those who follow the norms dictated from on high; who is seen as a mere tool of production.

¹⁵ *Puebla*, n. 28.

¹⁶ Address during the ad limina visit, October 4, 1984.

¹⁷ *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, n. 16.

The Church wants a liberation from all these forms of slavery. Your bishops moved along the same line in the norms pointed out in their recent document on the theology of liberation.

The Rights of Workers

In the Christian conception of society there always appears as a basic principle the affirmation of the inviolable dignity of the person, and consequently of the dignity of every worker. To this personal dignity corresponds a series of fundamental rights. The first of these is the right to have a job; a job in order to live, to be able to fulfill oneself as a person, to provide bread for one's family; a job that enriches society; a job that must be carried out in conditions worthy of a person, that is, conditions which damage neither the physical health nor the moral integrity of the workers.

Therefore unemployment and also underemployment constitute an evil and often "a real social disaster."¹⁸ It is humiliating for people and creates feelings of frustration, with dangerous psychological and moral consequences, especially for the young and for parents of families. The first concern of all responsible must be, therefore, to provide work for everyone. This is by no means an easy task but it should mobilize the energies of the whole nation.

In addition the worker must be assisted, technically and culturally, to prepare himself to carry out a work that satisfies him and at the same time contributes to the well-being of society. The Church has in this area a tradition which she must preserve and perfect.

A just salary, which covers the normal needs of a family, continues to be the concrete measure of justice in the whole socio-economic system, and in each case, of its just functioning.¹⁹ In the same way, all those social services (pensions, health and accident insurance, the right to rest, etc.) whose purpose is to ensure the life and health of workers and their families.²⁰

I am aware of the inherent difficulties which, in this time of such acute socio-economic crisis, impede the concrete and effective realization of these rights. However, I want to call it to the attention of all those responsible, directly or

¹⁸ *Laborem exercens*, n. 18.

¹⁹ *Laborem exercens*, n. 19.

²⁰ *Laborem exercens*, n. 19.

indirectly for the socio-economic order, that they strive more than ever to make this ideal possible. The Church and Christians have the right and the obligation to contribute to this, as far as they are able, by diligently carrying out their respective duties; and they must do it united in associations and institutions that society creates for pursuing the common good of all the citizens.

The Social Function of Business

A word, finally, to the businessmen, without whom it would not be possible to render many of these rights effective. I would like to remind these, with the social teaching of the Church, that they must give their enterprises a social function. They must not conceive them only as instruments of production and profit, but also as a community of persons.²¹ The gradual building of a more just society will depend on the union of workers and entrepreneurs, under the responsible direction of government leaders.

25.

THE PROBLEMS OF WORK MUST BE SEEN IN THE CONTEXT OF HUMAN DIGNITY AND SOLIDARITY²²

Common Good, Dominion over the Earth, Environment, Human Development/Progress, Meaning of Work, Solidarity, Unemployment.

It is with lively joy that I find myself in your midst, you who are representatives of the vast and important field of work, which here too at Porto Marghera embodies

²¹ *Puebla*, n. 1.246.

²² This material was delivered as an address on June 17, 1985 in Venice, Italy, to workers, contractors, and executives of the Porto Marghera complex. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, August 12, 1985, p. 9-10.

the greatness of man's work and also all the tensions of present day society. It likewise manifests the just aspirations towards a world in which man's labor is properly valued, by putting the human person at the center.

My greetings and my esteem go to you, workers, who every day experience physical fatigue; to you executives and technicians, who strive to alleviate this fatigue; to you contractors, who feel the duty to dedicate time and resources in the service of an economy for man.

Through you it is my desire to greet the whole working world of this region of Veneto, from which many of you come, leaving your villages to seek a source of livelihood here. I express sincere and warm solidarity with laborers, farmers, artisans, small businessmen, workers of the production and services sectors, and fishermen.

I come to you with the heart of a brother in order to share your thoughts and concerns, to underline your research and initiatives, to encourage everyone, the Christian community and men of good will, so that every effort might be made in all areas and at every level to face and to complete the processes of renewal and restructuring, together with the fundamental problem of employment for all.

Problems of Work

Serious questions arise from the situation of "crisis." They must not merely be read in an economic, political and technical key, but also, and above all, in an ethical one. Every crisis in fact obliges us to review and to verify our mentality and our life according to various aspects.

The world of work is today going through a time of great unrest: there is not enough work, and the number of unemployed, especially among the young, grows daily; living conditions, even though better overall, are not yet satisfactory; solidarity, threatened by personal and group selfishness, is achieved with difficulty; security of life, founded upon a concrete and just social peace, does not yet seem to have been attained; the economy resists bending its laws in the service of man; the error of economism which considers human work exclusively according to its economic result, is far from being corrected.

I know that here at Porto Marghera there has been a drop of nearly thirteen thousand in the number of jobs from the seventies to today; the problem of lay-offs is well known; many young people have great difficulty in finding a job, dignity, and a personal, family, and social future....

This extraordinary reality of work and of problems, of hopes and expectations which is Porto Marghera, today faces a situation which can only be expressed in economic terms of “crisis.”

There are the international fluctuations of the economy, of marketing and finance, and the conditions deriving from the rapid and widespread application of new technologies. To these, one can certainly add the national and local problems that it is your task to carefully analyze in order to deal with them by making the necessary interventions, according to your particular competencies, always honoring the commitments and responsibilities assumed.

And this must be done with urgency and courage in order to avoid the many negative effects of this critical situation, which in the end hurt those who are the weakest.

Need for an Ethical Spirit

While expressing my human and Christian solidarity with those who pay the greatest price in terms of personal and family suffering in the present situation—with the men and women who have lost their jobs, with the young people who at times despair of finding work—I wish at the same time to tell everyone that the reality of Porto Marghera is a patrimony of experience in the areas of labor, management, trade unions, professionalism and technological research that must be conserved, increased and made fruitful for the benefit of the region’s development. But its revival will either embody an ethical spirit or it will not be authentic growth.

The climate of uncertainty and fear which is created by the crisis can lead to distrust, to turning in upon oneself, one’s family or group. Prompting fatalistic attitudes, the search for individual defense through having two jobs or working illegally; situations which, while at times understandable, in general easily cause inequality and injustice. Solidarity is harmed, within consciences and within its institutional structures.

An increasingly economistic and consumer mentality is being spread, one which exalts the privileged and penalizes the weak; which strongly conditions the birth-rate, the education of children, relations with others, especially with the most disadvantaged and the elderly, weakening the motivations for gratuitous service and active participation. That which collapses is the religious and moral sense of life. The strong and motivated recovery of the deeper ethical reasons for communal life—in work, in solidarity and in generosity, truly carrying one another’s burdens (Gal 6:2)—will give vigor to the inventiveness and courage necessary to look to the future with serious and

realistic projects; to reweave the dialectic relationship—which is always constructive if pursued with fairness and justice—between contractors, executives, and workers, all of them interested in the growth of Porto Marghera.

The Human Being is Both the Subject and Object of Work

In facing current challenges today's world—and the world of work as well—has need of reconciliation with "God's project." God has called man to be the "lord of created things." Man cannot be an object dominated by economic or political laws, nor can he be reduced to the level of an instrument. Man must subdue the earth, he must dominate it, because as the image of God he is a person, that is, a subjective being capable of acting in a planned and rational way, capable of deciding for himself and tending to realize himself. As a person, man is therefore the subject of work."²³

There will not be true growth until there is an insistence of the fact that man is the primary foundation of the value of work and that the object of work, of any work done by man is always man himself.

In present day circumstances the need for a new solidarity which is both generous and effective is emerging ever more forcefully. A solidarity which would help to single out new means of growth: a solidarity which would face up to the difficulties currently experienced in the world of work; solidarity, therefore, before the problem of unemployment as well.

Everyone is Responsible

As my predecessor Paul VI said: "Let everyone examine himself to see what he has done thus far and what he must still do. It is not enough to recall principles, affirm intentions, underline the strident injustices, and offer prophetic denunciations: these words will not have real weight unless in each person they are accompanied by a more vivid awareness of his responsibility, and by effective action. It is too easy to shift the blame for injustices onto others, if one is not at the same time convinced that each man participates in them and that personal conversion is the first necessity."²⁴ Everyone is called to a serious commitment, in his own place and according to his responsibility.

²³ *Laborem exercens*, n. 6.

²⁴ *Octogesima adveniens*, n. 48.

To Management

You contractors have the duty to act in such a way that economic laws are increasingly at the service of man, and at the same time to find—in the current transformation of business and of work methods themselves—methods, technology, and goals which restore man to his position as the primary foundation of work. How can the tension between capital and labor be resolved? I have already given a response in the encyclical on human work.²⁵ Still, new reflections can be made in this period in which new technologies enter more and more broadly into the productive cycle, and science daily provides new ways of actualizing the notions acquired.

To Workers

You workers have the obligation of founding your mutual solidarity upon new bases. The current crisis, new working conditions, new problems regarding the planning of one's own life, new areas of participation, the prospects of continual growth—these require new attitudes and a new mentality. Today you can be the protagonists of the new reality which is in the process of being formed. Insist and strive in such a way that this new reality assumes and realizes the great values of man's dignity, of the sanctity of the family, of community participation, of peace and justice. From this port, which in the past has seen ships from all over the world come and go, may your vision and your activity extend itself to the workers of the entire world. And in the same way that you strive to eliminate differences and discrimination concerning opportunities and rights among workers in your region and in your country, so also strive towards these goals for the workers of the whole world.

To Politicians

You who are involved in political affairs have the duty to discern new ways of dealing with the current crisis situation. Your perceptions, translated into wise and just laws, will make the transition to a more just and humane civilization possible. The recovery of the willingness to serve the common good is indispensable in order that each person might be able to question himself regarding the role which has been entrusted to him and to take his proper place in the life of society: with that ethical sense in choosing, that stringent and transparent morality in public activities, which alone can guarantee credibility and trust and promote a more active participation on

²⁵ *Laborem exercens*, nn. 11-15.

the part of all citizens, culminating in that power which is love, capable of shaping human life in its various dimensions.

To Christian Communities

I address in a special way all the Christian communities from which you workers of Porto Marghera come; communities in which you should feel at home because they are open and hospitable; communities in which you yourselves must be present and participating, bringing the contribution of your ideas and experiences, values and hopes.

Pastors and laity can together render their service to the Gospel and to the world of work, with an ecclesial and missionary spirit and with a style of true communion and sharing. And with them, all the communities—not estranged, but sensitive and formed—will be ready to welcome what Pope John XXIII rightly considered the first among “the signs of the times; the economic and social ascent of the working classes” accompanied by the “need to be considered and treated not as beings devoid of intelligence and freedom, at the mercy of the will of others, but always as subjects or persons in all sectors of society.”²⁶

Jesus not only proclaimed but first of all accomplished with deeds the Gospel entrusted to him, the Word of eternal wisdom. Thus it was also the “Gospel of Work,” because he who proclaimed it was himself a man of work.

26.

SOLIDARITY IS NEEDED TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF WORK²⁷

Common Good, Dominion over the Earth, Entrepreneurship, Meaning of Work, Solidarity, Technology, Unemployment, Work and Family.

²⁶ *Pacem in terris*, n. 267.

²⁷ This material was delivered as an address on May 10, 1986 in Ravenna, Italy, to workers and entrepreneurs at a petroleum chemical plant. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 2, 1986, pp. 9, 15.

I have come to Romagna, at the invitation of your bishops, in order to help the Christian communities prepare for the third millennium. The relationship between economic development and work is already showing itself to be the dominant problem of the coming decades; and it will take on increasing importance worldwide. It is sufficient to consider the fact that the vanquishing of starvation and the human liberation of entire continents is tied to this problem. All of this is going to require an immense common effort involving everyone: economists, researchers, public bodies, entrepreneurs, and workers with their trade unions.

This also means that when, before the reality of unemployment, the Church reflects upon the relationship between technical-economic development and the moral principles that underlie it, she does not overstep her bounds or lose herself in abstractions: the acceleration of history is already demonstrating the social relevance of moral principles.

Technological Development and the Human Person

Returning to the question of Romagna, it is well known that the work crisis has been heavily aggravated by the introduction of automation in many areas of production; and everyone, among both workers and entrepreneurs, is aware of the difficulties and the problems that such changes bring with them. Still, our attitude in the face of technological progress cannot be one of rejection or fear. “Technology is undoubtedly man’s ally. It facilitates his work, perfects, accelerates and augments it.”²⁸ We might add, quoting your bishops’ recent Pastoral Note, that the new technologies “can exalt people’s creativity in the process of development, freeing man from its most alienating and repetitive aspects.”

Even the most sophisticated technology and machines are thus the fruit and the instrument of human work; but the true subject of work is always and exclusively man. Instruments cannot be raised to the level of protagonists and placed above the working man without a reversal of the order of reality and a fatal inversion of the relationship necessary between the means and the end. The experience of recent years confirms the fact that technology, if its use is not guided and enlightened by a superior moral criterion, can change from being an ally to being almost an adversary of man, as when the mechanization of work “supplants” man, robs many workers of employment, or, through the exaltation of machines, reduces man to their servant.²⁹

²⁸ *Laborem exercens*, n. 5.

²⁹ *Laborem exercens*, n. 5.

We are called to dominate change and not to be dominated by it. But this can take place only to the extent that we are able to overcome that split between ethics and the economy that has kept the great conquests of the modern age from fully benefiting man.

Work for the Sake of the Worker

I would like to place the meaning of my visit to you, workers and entrepreneurs of Romagna, within the context of an effort to heal this split.

You know that, while in the past there was a tendency to present work as the only source and measure of man's value, now we are seeing the emergence of so-called "functional" perspectives according to which work is meaningful only as an occupation viewed in terms of material gain. For precisely this reason it is becoming more necessary than ever to recover the conviction that "work is a fundamental dimension of human existence on earth,"³⁰ on the condition, however, that it is not seen as the final end, but subordinated to that end which is man.³¹

Solidarity and the Principle of Subsidiarity

From this truth, dear workers and entrepreneurs, a pressing appeal rises up to you; the appeal for solidarity. In order to live and grow together, men have always needed to find paths to understanding, mutual assistance and collaboration.

Solidarity has its laws: it demands that no one be ambitious for a role of predominance, but that each instead be ready to recognize the functions of other forces and components and to welcome their contributions in a constructive way. This is valid within individual firms as well as in the entire productive process and, more broadly still, in the life of society.

Seen from the perspective of solidarity, the diverse but complementary roles of every sector involved in work and production acquire greater and more authentic significance. Entrepreneurs and executives will be recognized for their role in giving unity in decision making, coordination and dynamism to the firm's activity.

³⁰ *Laborem exercens*, n. 4

³¹ *Laborem exercens*, n. 6.

Those who are self-employed, and who thus continuously take upon themselves the responsibility, efforts and risks of work, give elasticity to the entire productive system, and must be suitably sustained according to the principle of subsidiarity. This principle states that neither the State nor any society may take the place of the initiative of individuals and intermediate communities in those areas in which it is possible for them to act.³²

For their part, employees not only have the right to a just wage, assuring them and their families of an adequate standard of living, but they are also called to participate co-responsibly in the initiatives and decisions that regard the life of the firm, and thus their own future. They must also be able to work under conditions that safeguard, together with their physical health, the dignity and the room for creativity proper to human work: in this way they will be able to see themselves as authentically “co-owners” of the great workbench.³³

Solidarity within the Firm and Family

Dear workers and entrepreneurs, you know well that every right carries with it a precise duty: this principle of justice and equity regulates not only our mutual relations, but likewise the contribution that each of us is called to make to the common good. If we desire a more just society, a better quality of life, we must all be capable of looking beyond our own particular and immediate advantage, and be ready to carry loyally our portion of the collective burdens.

I would further like to invite you to broaden your vision beyond the realm of your direct work responsibilities, and this in two directions, one close at hand and the other more distant.

The first regards human relations within the firm. The world of work is not all to be found in the work contract; it also lies in the harmony of friendship. It becomes fully human only when, beyond the zone of the useful, fraternity appears, that communion of spirits which is the enlargement of the life of each individual through participation in the lives of others.

I recommend to your care the young who are making their first contact with this new world. Be attentive to their initial welcome you give them: they can receive from it a great and meaningful orientation.

³² Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation, n. 73.

³³ *Laborem exercens*, nn. 14-15.

Remember, too, your social commitments. I am referring especially to your family relations: in the past, the solidity of family ties has constituted a great reservoir of moral energies for the people of Romagna, with largely positive influences in terms of industriousness and rectitude of behavior. Today it is precisely the crisis of the family—evident from the scourges of divorce and abortion, from the low birth rate, and from people’s reluctance to contract marriage—that could lead to a loss of meaning and values, with unforeseeable consequences on the level of commitment and fidelity to work as well.

Universal Solidarity

The other direction in which I exhort you to look embraces the immense mass of suffering and threatened humanity: from the immigrants who seek work and bread in your midst to the innumerable multitudes of starving people. This mass also includes all those who suffer the tragedy of war, terrorism, the deprivation of fundamental rights, beginning with the right to religious freedom.³⁴

Ravenna is an ancient beacon of civilization which has projected its light from east to west, among ancient peoples and new peoples. May she now be capable of contributing to the realization of a universal solidarity that will be the builder of peace, and this through your work as well....

May the Lord bless these efforts and these proposals. May the world of work, which has often been the first to suffer from that separation of faith from life which has negatively conditioned the events of modern history and produced effects harmful to man, now benefit from a renewed encounter with Christ, the Redeemer of man.

³⁴ Discourse to the Ecclesial Conference of Loreto, n. 8.

27.

SOLIDARITY DIRECTS WORK TO THE COMMON GOOD³⁵

Human Rights/Dignity, Solidarity, World Community.

This meeting gives me the opportunity to reflect with you on a theme that is common to your programs, the theme of solidarity. You plan to reflect on this question not only inasmuch as it is a social phenomenon that is felt with particular strength among workers, but also insofar as it is an ethical value that touches upon the consciences of Christians. You are in fact aware that solidarity is a proclamation very much present in the words of Christ: “this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”³⁶

Network of Interdependencies

It is a fact that every person constantly receives help from persons far and near. He takes advantage of material, moral, cultural, and religious goods created by entire generations. Everyone lives off the work, the efforts, the fervor, and the sacrifices of many of his fellows. He benefits from their solidarity: it is thus right that he in turn offer his own solidarity to others. This is particularly true in our day, when all work is carried out within a very large network of interdependencies which condition from various angles its possibility and development. This fact reinforces the need—which is noted with ever greater clarity and awareness—to see work as a unique moment of participation and generous sharing: in a word, of constructive solidarity.

God desires a world founded on justice and fraternity. These virtues form the foundation for the order that must sustain interpersonal relations. But this order must be continually promoted and adapted as social structures and ways of life are gradually renewed and developed. We are seeking continual progress and a rapid transformation of man’s living conditions, under the impulse of new economic conditions and possibilities, of new technical capacities and systems of production. In the context of this progress there have also developed further requirements of participation, and other forms of solidarity have been made possible.

³⁵ This material was delivered as an address on December 6, 1986 in Rome, to representatives of the Worker's Movement of Catholic Action and the Christian Workers Movement, plus participants in the Conference of Catholic Action Vice Presidents. The translation was taken from *The Pope Speaks*, Summer 1987, pp. 121-125.

³⁶ Jn 15:12.

Solidarity: Pursuit of the Good of All

It is necessary to see to it that the persons comprising the individual human organizations are able to cooperate ever more responsibly in providing the goods needed and desired by all. This presumes the involvement not only of people's technical skills, but also of their spiritual faculties, with the aim of reaching the understanding necessary for the pursuit of the common interest. This understanding is impossible unless each person makes an effort to open himself to the objective consideration of the good of others and not only of himself. Therein lies solidarity, which thus reveals itself as a fundamental expression of the social character immanent in human nature and a uniquely significant dimension of Christian love. It is in this dimension that every person can recognize himself as a brother to others.

Solidarity offers the exciting opportunity to communicate oneself to others in a peaceful and constructive way; it permits the establishment of coordinated and stable relations corresponding to the real needs of persons and communities; it also helps in overcoming those conditions of loneliness and isolation that often lead to the inability to communicate and to alienation. In solidarity, moreover, man tends to communicate to his brother his convictions regarding the deep meaning of life and work, from the perspective of the full realization of the transcendent destiny of every human being. It is obvious that this support found in the sharing of supreme values is today more urgent than ever, precisely because the growing automation of productive progress, while it tends to reduce the material intervention of man, also risks depreciating his spiritual significance, rendering the activity of the subject marginal and repetitive. It is therefore necessary to sustain and orient work by a strong spiritual motivation, which will be all the more easily transmitted and nourished in proportion to the liveliness and authenticity of the climate of solidarity which pervades the work environment.

Solidarity Pursued Through Dialogue and Peace

An objective and complete discourse must at this point also refer to those disturbing phenomena of solidarity which are reduced to systematic opposition between classes, with consequent manifestations of struggle that often provoke an increase in conflict, social instability, and ideological confusion among people.

It is certainly necessary to make every effort, through the solidarity of all workers, to eliminate all sources of injustice, disparity, and inequitable privileges. However, it is also necessary to affirm, with clarity and vigor, that the road to improvement does not pass by way of hatred, the systematic division of social groups, violence and domination. It is therefore essential that all movements of Christian

inspiration be deeply united in the greatest solidarity so as to propose the authentic path to affirm forcefully—when faced with proposals of violence— the human value of dialogue and peace.

Global and National Commitments to Solidarity

Before the broadening and intensification of human relations in the various spheres of social life, other forms of solidarity can and must be considered, in order increasingly to adapt to the requirements of the person and the structures in which he is called to work.

It will first of all be necessary to make a deep commitment to promoting an active solidarity at a global level. Today, decisions made in one part of the world have repercussions through the rest of the world. Furthermore, social problems have become so widespread as to reach habitually the dimensions of all humanity. It is necessary, then, that the choices made by public authorities, as well as by union and management organization, be made in a spirit of solidarity, that is, with the consciousness that one cannot ignore the repercussions that such decisions will have on entire nations or on particular sectors of human society, involving rights, needs, and aspirations common to all. The spirit of solidarity will lead people to consider the good of each community and to strive for a just share of all in the goods of this world, helping to avoid or reduce existing imbalances. Thus solutions will be sought that respect the dignity of each particular community, including the poorest, because no people can pretend to reserve exclusively to itself the riches at its disposal.

At the national level, too, solidarity requires that in relations between corporations the criteria of conflict and domination be overcome. The development of technical civilization involves the establishment of new forms of work at the expense of others which are now obsolete. Still, this should not happen in such way that it generates painful phenomena of recession in some sectors, with pockets of unemployment and poverty. Economic problems, even those technical in nature, must not be separated from their ethical and social aspects.

Solidarity at the national level therefore requires the efforts of all responsible powers, public and private, so as to avoid a situation in which the progress of some is paid for with the exorbitant sacrifices and humiliations of others. There must be a determined and courageous effort toward the arduous goal of creating continual employment opportunities through the proposal and support of jobs which, while being useful and productive, are at the same time within reach of those who, because of age or culture, find it difficult to keep pace with technological progress.

Solidarity among Organizations and Workers

Solidarity also requires opportune coordination between large and small firms. It is justifiable to fear at times that the great organizational capacity of the more powerful concerns might develop in a predominant and exclusive way, reinforcing privileges and powers to the detriment of smaller concerns and of participation in the common good of work. Everything possible must be done not only to keep development from permitting the persistence of unjust situations, but to prevent it from creating new ones.

Finally, there exists a new form of solidarity that calls out in a particular way to workers' movements such as those you represent.

It must be acknowledged that workers have shown themselves able to respond to the appeal of solidarity, working effectively in defense of man as the subject of work, in the face of pressing forms of exploitation present in the industrial structures created by capital.

Today, however, solidarity presents you with a broader field of action. It invites you not to favor certain categories of workers, but to consider the effects that the current technological revolution is having on all sectors of employment. As I recalled in the encyclical *Laborem exercens*, "moments of solidarity in the sphere of work . . . can be necessary also with reference to the condition of social groups that were not previously included in such movements but which, in changing social systems and conditions of living, are undergoing what is in effect 'proletarianization.'"³⁷ And so it is necessary that workers not close themselves off in a solidarity which is limited and circumscribed by the interests of the category or sector to which they belong, but that they consider the conditions under which others are living as well. True solidarity must be present wherever the subject of work—that is, man—finds himself in conditions of poverty, wretchedness, exploitation, and injustice.

Christ and Solidarity

You lay men and women are the ones who must take upon yourselves the specific task of renewing in a significant way the relations internal to the working world, infusing them with a greater and more equitable solidarity.

³⁷ *Redemptor hominis*, n. 8.

The principle of solidarity, rooted at once in the personality and the social character of man, indicates a reciprocal bond and duty which finds singularly profound motivations in the Christian faith.

It is first of all the example of Christ that reveals the sublimes form of solidarity. He joined himself to all men, even the most miserable, unto death on the Cross, for the salvation of all. From His redemptive sacrifice sprang forth a “newly created” humanity³⁸ in which unity is so deep that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”³⁹ In this mystery of unity we can discern the greatness, the dignity, the value, but also the urgency of a true solidarity uniting all men and women. Christians must become ever more credible heralds of this message in the world.

28.

THE “GREAT PROSPECT” OF A MORE HUMAN SOCIETY PRESUPPOSES THE HUMANIZATION OF WORK⁴⁰

Collaboration with God, Culture of Work, Humanization/Dehumanization, Justice, Leisure, Work and Family

In carrying out her task of evangelization, the Church has always been attentive to the context of those realities within which she lives, reflecting in her heart the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of humanity.⁴¹

³⁸ *Redemptor hominis*, n. 10.

³⁹ Gal 3:28.

⁴⁰ This material was delivered as an address on December 13, 1986 in Rome, to Italian executives, trade unionists and academics. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, January 12, 1987, p. 3.

⁴¹ *Gaudium et spes*, n. 1.

Thus from the beginning she has taken an interest in the economic and social aspects of the human person, instituting even at the time of the Apostles seven “deacons” with the duty of presiding over and organizing the service of assistance within the Christian community.⁴² In the period following the barbarian invasion and the fall of the Roman Empire, the Church strove to respond to the social problems of the moment by creating hospices, charitable confraternities, *Misericordiae*, schools and centers of hospitality in the monasteries.

She was also present with her constant teaching, aimed at forming the consciences of the Christian people regarding the duty of charity, care of the poor, the use of goods and their social destination, the obligation to allocate superfluous goods to the needy, and the need to bear the misfortunes of life with fortitude and hope, while seeking to overcome them to the extent possible. The medieval era was to see great theologians developing the themes of justice, law, politics, and international relations.

Later, with the rise of industrial society, the Church once again made herself heard, condemning economic amorality, whether in the form of capitalistic greed or of a socialism lacking respect for the dignity of the human person. At the same time, she strove to map out the great lines of a vision of the world and work that took its inspiration from the Gospel for a just solution to the social question.

The Dynamic Character of Social Encyclicals

Rerum novarum of Pope Leo XIII was a document of such importance that it became the point of reference for subsequent papal social teaching, beginning with Pius XI on the fortieth anniversary of the encyclical, and then at ten-year intervals until Paul VI and his *Octogesima adveniens*. *Laborem exercens*, too was meant to enter into this river of tradition which swells as it flows along. It took work as its object of particular reflection. Five years have passed since that encyclical’s publication: an arc of time dense with history and rapid changes, with new developments in technological, economic, and political conditions. The developments have greatly influenced—and will continue to influence—the evolution of work, of this dimension of human existence from which man’s life is built up every day, and about which there continually arise new questions and problems, new hopes, but also ever new fears and threats.⁴³

⁴² Acts 6:5.

⁴³ *Laborem exercens*, n. 1.

It is not for the Church to analyze scientifically the consequences that these changes may have on human society.⁴⁴ However, in your capacity as lay persons animated by the faith, as Christian animators of the contemporary world, you are and must be capable of carving out this analysis, of preparing the future.

Priority of the Worker

It is the Church's task to recall continually the dignity and rights of workers, calling attention to situations in which these are violated, and to contribute to orienting changes, so that the progress of man and society will be authentic.

There is no authentic progress when in the world of work the human dimension is in some way compromised. The encyclical which you are studying insists on the principle that the first foundation of the value of work is man himself, who is its subject.⁴⁵ Work is a means, never an end. Man is primary. The end of work is the worker, that is, the person who is working.

The perfection of man obtained through the development of his faculties has greater value than the external riches which he can produce with his work.⁴⁶ Whence the rejection of all solutions, old and new, in which work is considered merely an element of production and the worker is subordinated to his activity, transformed from subject into object, from end into means, from a person into a thing.

In your document you have expressed the hope that Christians might make themselves bearers of a culture of work, demonstrating an effective capacity for social initiative. This must be the point of departure for every project and program: the whole productive process must be adapted to the needs of the person and to the conditions of his life.⁴⁷ It is from this perspective that the growing tragedy of unemployment, especially among the young, must be reconsidered and resolved. Lack of work humiliates a person, making him appear useless in his own eyes, and it impoverishes society, which is deprived of effective and willing forces.

⁴⁴ *Laborem exercens*, n. 1.

⁴⁵ *Laborem exercens*, n. 6.

⁴⁶ *Gaudium et spes*, n. 35.

⁴⁷ *Gaudium et spes*, n. 67.

Work and the Family

The other sphere of values consisting in the family dimension of work must be re-examined from this angle. The family, which is a natural right and vocation of man, has an essential relation with work, for it is work that normally assures it of the necessary means of subsistence.⁴⁸ Moreover, when he works to ensure the means of subsistence for his family, a human being puts all his love into his daily labors. Love contributes to increasing the nobility of work. When, instead, work disintegrates the family, it ends by destroying its very purpose.

In this area, social legislation still leaves much to be desired. I am referring in particular to the situation of women, who, while seeing their work in the home go unrecognized and undefended from a juridical and economic point of view, are often subjected to a stressful pace in work outside the home, which keeps them away from their husbands and children, often leading them to renounce the grandeur of maternity.

Accelerated efforts must be made to find satisfactory solutions in this area, solutions which guarantee both effective equality among persons and their specific character.

Collaboration with Divine Providence

What I have said up to now finds its integration and also its highest motivation in the spiritual dimension of work.

The human being, with the satisfaction and the weight of his labors, is inexplicable without him who, after having created man, offers to him as a gift the universe with its complex forces (still largely unknown), so that he may cultivate, keep, and dominate it.⁴⁹ In recognizing the reality of God as personal and transcendent, man—who does not create matter but finds it already existing—situates himself in a new and most original way with respect to the cosmos. With this attitude he frees himself from the enticing grip of natural forces, keeps from being dominated by them, indeed, elevates himself, consenting to be a collaborator with the divine design.

The spirituality of work consists in the awareness of this profound reality that man, through his work, can place himself in a relation with his ultimate destiny,

⁴⁸ *Laborem exercens*, n. 10.

⁴⁹ Gen 2:15.

becoming an ally of the living God. Furthermore, when the truth that work was done by the human hands of the very Son of God in the little workshop of Nazareth is embraced, the effort to transform the world becomes liberation from moral evil and insertion in a new long range project, extending beyond the confines of history. With faith in Christ, man participates in the project which is in the process of being realized: the salvation of the whole man.

Dear brothers and sisters, faced with the broad horizons of this vision proposed by the social doctrine of the Church, one conclusion appears certain: the realization of the prospect of a more human society, something to which we all aspire, is unthinkable without the simultaneous humanization of that fundamental component which is work. Yet we see that it is just as impossible to make the world of work more human if it is not treated and oriented in accordance with God's plan.

You, the laity, are called to this specific task, in the vast spectrum of your areas of work: you are called to strive as workers from within, as evangelical leaven in the midst of temporal realities.

29. BUSINESS SHOULD RECOGNIZE AND ACCEPT ITS INTEGRAL ROLE IN SOCIETY⁵⁰

Common Good, Community of Persons, Dominion over the Earth, Economic Laws and Profits, Entrepreneurship, Materialism and Consumerism, Solidarity.

Work, in all its forms, is an essential component of human life; or, as I wrote in the Encyclical *Laborem exercens*, “a fundamental dimension of man's existence on earth.”⁵¹ This “fundamental dimension” is concretized today in the form of business,

⁵⁰ This material was delivered as an address on April 17, 1988 in Verona, Italy, to managers and workers. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, May 2, 1988, pp. 7-8.

⁵¹ *Laborem exercens*, n. 4.

factories, laboratories, and various offices. It is a pluralistic and very diversified reality, one in which, however, we see common elements which converge in a grand and fundamental design: the transformation of some material or pre-existing element resulting, through the cooperation of intelligence and manual labor, in goods and services for the use of the human community. There is also need of capital—that is, of various kinds of investments—of technology and of the labor of each individual worker in order to attain this goal.

Interdependence of Business and Society

The first characteristic of a modern firm and of its social function, in this context of great complexity, is without a doubt that of interdependence. Each of its components is equally necessary, and it is useless to speculate about the primacy of one or another of them.

However, there is a similar interdependence between society and the world of industry and services; society has need of what is provided by the activities of production, and these latter, in turn, have need both of the outlet offered by society in terms of its purchasing capacity and of the resources it provides in the form of potential workers, investments and technology. We are all well aware that that interdependence is no longer contained within the boundaries of a society or nation, but extends to continental and intercontinental dimensions.

Interdependence Implies Solidarity

If we are “all really responsible for all”⁵² in every setting and dimension of human life, then this is all the more true in the dimension of productive activity and economic life.

Now this tightly woven and capillary interdependence can be endured because it is necessary or it can be accepted and assumed as a moral obligation. When it is interpreted in the second way—the only way truly worthy of the human, individual, and social vocation—then interdependence is transformed from a more or less conscious reality into a value, the value of solidarity.

This in its turn means, dear representatives of the world of labor, that your activities, which are tied to the earthly dimensions of life, have radical moral

⁵² *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 38.

implications; indeed, they must be governed by moral criteria. The first of these criteria is precisely that of solidarity.

In the encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, . . . I returned to this fundamental idea several times,⁵³ emphasizing that it is a question of a “moral category,” of a “virtue,” not of “a feeling of vague compassion.” Solidarity is the “firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good.”⁵⁴ In the same context I added that this is the way, indeed the only way, to conquer, by a diametrically opposed attitude . . . the causes hindering full development: the lust for profit and thirst for power at any cost.”⁵⁵

The Validity of Moral Criteria

The application of the criterion of solidarity to the activity of production, and in particular to the world of business enterprise, has very significant consequences for the solution of the problems to which your spokesman referred. The first consequence, as I have already noted in passing, is that of admitting the existence of moral criteria, and not just economic ones, at the base of production, and of feeling bound to observe them for reasons of conscience and not just of law. The other immediate consequence is that when the time comes to make practical decisions, those involved in that activity must deliberate and choose in the light of those criteria.

Among them, the criterion of the common good is certainly primary. In fact, the objective norm of solidarity is the good of “each man and of all men,” considered in the light of their dignity as images, indeed as children, of God.

Profit Must Be Regulated by Moral Criteria

From this perspective it is clear that the sole criterion of profit is insufficient, especially when it is raised to the level of an absolute; “earning” more in order to “possess” more, not only tangible objects but also financial holdings, making it possible to enjoy new forms of property that are ever more extensive and ever more dominating. Not that aiming at profit is in itself unjust; a business cannot do without it. The reasonable attempt to make a profit is, for that matter, connected with the

⁵³ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, nn. 38, 39, *passim*.

⁵⁴ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 38.

⁵⁵ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 38.

right of “economic initiative” which I defended in the encyclical just cited.⁵⁶ I merely intend to say that, in order to be just, profit must be regulated by moral criteria, in particular by those connected with the principle of solidarity.

A Business Is a Community

This principle also has a precise bearing on relations within the firm, requiring the respectful observance of the rights of all who collaborate in it. Indeed, a business firm is not merely an instrument at the service of the well-being of its management; rather, it is itself a common good of both management and labor, at the service of the common good of society.

Anyone who collaborates, at any level, possesses the rights that correspond to his role in the common enterprise, as well as the respective obligations. In particular, he enjoys those rights and duties which proceed from his dignity as a man or a woman called, indeed obliged, to live a life that is truly human in all its dimensions: affective, cultural, social, spiritual, religious. This, once again, is a consequence not merely of legal impositions, valid though they may be, but of the obligations of conscience, both human and Christian.

Management Must Be Open to the Poor and to Others

From this perspective the weakest and poorest of people certainly have a priority in our concern, as the recent encyclical,⁵⁷ along with the whole Christian tradition, affirms. The “poor” exist in business, too; above all, there are the true “poor,” that is, the huge number of unemployed, or of those who have been laid off. The ironclad logic of profit would have us forget them or consider them superfluous or, worse yet, add to their numbers. On the contrary, we must vigorously affirm that a man, a woman, a young person, is never superfluous, nor can he or she be left out in planning new projects.

I would like to add that entrepreneurs should not forget themselves when it comes to developing all the dimensions of a truly human life. The law of profit and the demands of ever more demanding managerial work can never take the place of every man and woman’s duty to be open to family, neighbor, culture, society and, above all, to God. This multifaceted openness to the higher values of the human person will certainly help to give managerial tasks also their true meaning and proper measure.

⁵⁶ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 15.

⁵⁷ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 42.

Consumerism and the Common Good

The value of solidarity and of the common good must also govern relations between business and society both on the national and on the international levels.

There are instruments which should not be produced, or whose production and marketing should be rigorously controlled. The first example is arms,⁵⁸ but perhaps it is not the only one. Here also the law of profit cannot be supreme.

One could say, in this sense, that an important task of Christian entrepreneurs, and of anyone who has man's true good at heart, would be to establish in today's world a sort of scale of priorities among the goods to be produced. Not all goods, in fact, are equally useful or necessary. The criterion of solidarity and the common good should be applied here in a precise way in order to help us understand better that certain products have a more intimate impact on man's "being" while others serve only his "having and thus have less value from the human point of view, whatever their market value may be. Multiplying them, by means of an excessive and artificial substitution of ever new and immediately obsolete models is what we call "consumerism."⁵⁹ A business enterprise should not try to create superfluous needs in order then to seek to satisfy them with ever more sophisticated products which, in turn, create new needs.

Universal Dimension of Solidarity

Among the goods closest to man's "being," those which are necessary for sustenance, such as food, stand out. In this city, and in this fairground, I cannot fail to mention the very well-known traditions connected with farm production and the technology designed to increase and improve it. May further advances in the service of man's basic needs be made in this sector in Italy, but also in other parts of the world which are less favored and developed. The solidarity of which I was speaking in fact possesses this universal dimension, because the decisions made in one country always have effects, for good or evil, in the other countries as well.

We Are Not Masters of the Earth

Finally, respect for nature and for natural resources is part of the duty of solidarity and the obligation to promote the common good, as I observed in the

⁵⁸ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 24.

⁵⁹ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 28.

encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis*.⁶⁰ The use that our technologies make of these resources is also subject to moral norms. We are not absolute masters of these goods, but administrators who must be attentive to the consequences—in terms of the environment and the quality of life—which our decisions have on both the present generation and those of the future, to whom we must pass on a habitable world.

30.

CHRISTIANS MUST RESPOND TO GOD’S INITIATIVE AND COLLABORATE IN THE WORK OF REDEMPTION⁶¹

Christian Witness/Mission, Collaboration with God, Dominion over the Earth, Gospel of Work, Meaning of Work, Private Property/Co-ownership, Solidarity, Universal Destination of Goods, Work and Society.

From the beginning, man was called by God to “subdue the earth and have dominion over it.”⁶² Therefore, the work of the land is the first to be recommended, as we read in Genesis: The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.⁶³ It was a simple and pleasant task, because the Creator entrusted to man’s care “every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit”⁶⁴ and in the garden of Eden, God himself caused “to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden.”⁶⁵

⁶⁰ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 34.

⁶¹ This material was delivered as a homily on May 17, 1988 in Villarica, Paraguay, to farm workers, employers and politicians. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 27, 1988, pp. 12-13.

⁶² Gen 1:28.

⁶³ Gen 2:15.

⁶⁴ Gen 1:29.

⁶⁵ Gen 2:9.

Called to Share in the Work of the Creator

This story “is profoundly marked by the fundamental truth that man, created in the image of God, shares by his work in the activity of the Creator,” and that he is a co-worker with his Creator.⁶⁶ This truth, which refers to any kind of human work no matter how insignificant it seems, is applied in a special way to the work of the field.

How can we not recall here the many expressions that have come from the lips of Christ! How often he compared the kingdom of heaven to phenomena or activities that we can observe in nature almost every day! How well he knew the work in the fields, as his examples show!

Jesus speaks of the farmer, of sowing and harvesting,⁶⁷ of the lilies of the field and of the birds⁶⁸, of thistles and the wheat⁶⁹, of wine and oil.⁷⁰ He compares himself to the true vine and his Father to the vinedresser.⁷¹ Yet, how distant and irrelevant his teachings are to some! It could be said that the more they progress in subduing and dominating the land, the more they become forgetful of God, who created the earth and all that it contains.

The Effects of Original Sin

“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everybody was asleep, his enemy came, sowed darnel all among the wheat, and made off.”⁷²

In this field where the seed was sown, which refers to life, God’s gift to each one of us, one often finds the darnel, sowed here and there by the enemy. Actually, you know well the consequences of original sin. You have experienced the deep truth

⁶⁶ *Laborem exercens*, n. 25.

⁶⁷ Mk 4:26-29.

⁶⁸ Mk 6:25-34.

⁶⁹ Mt 13:24-30.

⁷⁰ Lk 16:1-12.

⁷¹ Jn 15:1.

⁷² Mt 13:24-25.

contained in those words of Genesis: “In toil you shall eat . . . all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.”⁷³ How much work still has to be done so that the seed sown in the ground may bear fruit in abundance! Cleaning up the brambles and briars, removing heaps of dirt and rubbish, looking after the irrigation, watching for harmful insects and pests—all those activities demand your dedication long before the harvest. What hardships! How many worries and uncertainties with regard to the present and the future!

The Reality of Injustice

Although it is true that this fertile land that the Lord has given you does reward your efforts abundantly, how often it happens that those who work it cannot enjoy its fruits. The absence of peace and tranquility because of the uncertainty of the family’s future or social security; the intransigence with regard to salaries and unjust labor contracts and even the difficulties that have to be overcome to get a property agreement: these are some of today’s thorns and thistles that worsen the already difficult conditions of your work. Then, new problems are added to these: marketing of your products; the prices determined from the cities; the questions concerning commercial politics on the national and international levels; in short, the interests of so many who, without considering the demands of the common good or the ever-growing basic needs of the farmers, have as their only goal profit at whatever cost.

Limits on the Right to Property

Many concentrate all their efforts on the accumulation of more and more goods and consider the right to property as something absolute, forgetting that it is “subordinated to the right to common use, to the fact that goods are meant for everyone.”⁷⁴ In this regard they forget the warning of the Apostle James: “Laborers mowed your fields, and you cheated them—listen to the wages that you kept back, calling out; realize that the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts,”⁷⁵ since they behave as if they will never have to give an account of their stewardship.⁷⁶

⁷³ Gen 3:17-10.

⁷⁴ *Laborem exercens*, n. 14.

⁷⁵ Jas 5:4.

⁷⁶ Lk 16:2.

Rural Problems Demand Solidarity

The solution of so many rural problems demands the solidary collaboration of all the sectors of society. Modern farming is also connected with the cities, where they can slow down or, on the contrary, bring to perfection the economic and juridical mechanisms without which work in the fields, no matter how abundant the results, will continue to benefit mainly only a few.

Out of a sentiment of solidarity and even more, out of a duty of justice, public authorities and all those whose business or professional activity is directly or indirectly related to the land, must recognize their obligation to seek a solution to the conflicts which face the farming sector of your land today. The progressive growth of industry, trade and services should not weigh unduly on the agricultural sector. Successively, the increase in productivity obtained in agriculture, cattle raising, and forestry should bring in just recompense and an improvement in the quality of life for all the workers and their families. The small independent producers should be able, without any kind of opposition, to count on the possibility of having free access to systems of commercialization and transformation that will not prejudice them. Lastly, we hope that timely measures will be introduced so that more farmers will have access to owning the land they till; without doubt, this will be a guarantee of progress and social stability.

The values that form the Paraguayan character—generous friendship, readiness to share, solidarity with the needy, love for the family and a sense of the transcendent—are deeply rooted in the rural life and work. This should lead all the inhabitants of this country to feel personally the problems and needs of the people of the farming sector.

Work as Collaboration in Redemption

God continues to trust in man; hence, sin and its consequences do not make void the Creator's command: "Subdue the earth and have dominion over it."⁷⁷ Through his life, Christ announces and accomplishes an authentic "gospel of work." Besides being a direct, although not the only, way of participating in the creative task of God the Father, physical work is called to be a form of collaboration with God the Son in the redemption of mankind. Indeed, your hardships, beloved farmers, your sweat, your anxieties, are by no means useless. They are the cross which you must take up daily: Christ wants you to help him carry the cross; you are to be another Simon of Cyrene as

⁷⁷ Gen 1:28.

it were, “who was coming in from the country,”⁷⁸ and took on his shoulders the cross Christ was carrying.

However, do not think that helping Christ carry the cross through work simply means the resigned acceptance of the difficulties you encounter. You know from experience that the cultivation of the land is a continuous challenge, since you have to take into consideration and cleverly cope with a whole range of natural elements as well as overcome many obstacles at the same time. Likewise, it is not totally wrong to think that the solution, at least in part, of many problems that afflict you, also depends on you. You must live in solidarity among yourselves, because solidarity is a Christian virtue that flows from charity, a distinctive sign of Christ’s disciples⁷⁹ and, consequently, a sign of being united with his Cross.⁸⁰

Respond to God’s Initiative

At the same time the horizons of an effective solidarity among yourselves are immense, as limitless as the demands of love. Indeed, the conscious and submissive collaboration with God through your work implies not only putting all your effort into cultivating your plantations and farms, but also contributing all your imagination, intelligence, and effort to productive common endeavor. God wants to help you, but he is waiting for your determined correspondence with his initiative. If you do not give it, you will not be fully living as his children and, without noticing it, you will be giving in to idleness and conformity. Very often, the desire for others to find the final solutions hides the escape from daily and intelligent effort.

Seek God in Your Daily Lives

Seek God in your work, in the circumstances of daily life. Seek him from the moment you wake up—very often before the first rays of the sun appear—until you take your well-deserved rest, perhaps exhausted from work. Seek God in work well done, in order to offer him something worthy: the best of your efforts.

In the celebration of the Mass the priest offers the bread, “which earth has given and human hands have made,” and the wine, “fruit of the vine and work of human

⁷⁸ Mk 15:21.

⁷⁹ Jn 13:35.

⁸⁰ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 40.

hands.” Together with that bread and wine, you can offer your entire day and your lives: work and rest, sleep and waking periods, sorrows and joys. All this, united to the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, receives its deepest value, a co-redemptive value.

“My plans are not your plans, your ways are not my ways,”⁸¹ God says through the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah. When the Christian vision of work is lost, man’s plans are no longer according to God’s plans; man’s ways are no longer God’s ways.

Spiritual Growth

However, the Prophet continues: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”⁸²

The Lord is always waiting for you. God, “rich in mercy,” is always ready to help us. However, in order that this “divine compassion truly be a source of peace for our spirits, it is necessary to return “to the Lord;” man must abandon “his own way” and enter through “the ways” of God. The soul of every person, like “good ground,” needs continuous attention for it to bear fruit.⁸³ It is necessary to sow the Word of God in it; it is necessary to water it frequently with the sacraments that infuse grace—especially Penance and the Eucharist—it is necessary to pull out the undergrowth of misdirected passions. You should cultivate your soul—and the souls of your children—even with greater love than you put in the cultivation of the land; it is your proudest boast and that which will give you more fruit. You can never be “*caigue*”—weak or lazy—with the things of God.

Laity’s Witness to the World

Every Christian is called to contribute by his life and work to the growth of the kingdom of God on earth. In today’s Gospel the kingdom of God is also compared to a mustard seed. In this parable we can also see a similarity with the growth of the Church, which, from its modest beginnings, has spread out to so many peoples, nations and countries. In this country of yours, this process which began almost five centuries ago possessed very special characteristics like the fertility of your fields and forests.

⁸¹ Is 55:8.

⁸² Is 55.

⁸³ Mt 13:8.

Today it is up to you to carry on that work until that small seed⁸⁴ produces “big branches so that the birds of the air can shelter in its shade and build nests in them.”⁸⁵ This is the whole Church’s mission; in it the activity of the laity occupies an eminent place. It is you, beloved laity, who are to give a Christian meaning to every temporal activity; the countryside and the city, industry and commerce, politics, culture, and the entire social life. That is your mission; “to impregnate the temporal order with the spirit of the gospel and bring it to perfection.”⁸⁶

The words of the Prophet; “I made him a witness to the peoples”⁸⁷ can be applied to the lay person who strongly feels in his heart the need for the apostolate. You, the laity, should fulfill this beautiful task, first of all, by the consistency of your life—witness to God’s presence among men—so that, in seeing “your good works, they may glorify your Father who is in heaven.”⁸⁸

31. WORK IS A MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION⁸⁹

Collaboration with God, Gospel of Work, Meaning of Work, Solidarity, Work and Prayer.

It is precisely in the name of Christ, who came on earth to unite man in the love of the common Father and to make all brethren, that labor problems are rightly

⁸⁴ Mk 4:31.

⁸⁵ Mk 4:32.

⁸⁶ *Apostolicam actuositatem*, n. 5.

⁸⁷ Is 55:4.

⁸⁸ Mt 5:16.

⁸⁹ This material was delivered as a homily on June 12, 1988 in Reggio Calabria, Italy, to workers and entrepreneurs. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, August 29, 1988, pp. 3-4.

entrusted to the solicitude of the Church; while not having the duty to devise purely technical solutions, she cannot be remote from and indifferent to all that relates to justice, respect for the human person, peace in families and in society. Neither can she remain distant from those who suffer, or are without work, or live in conditions unworthy of a human being.

The “way for the Church is, in fact, man.”⁹⁰ Christ himself wished to be united with him in a certain way.⁹¹ The Church, the Pope, and also your bishops have at heart the lot of men and women in their particular situations, especially those of workers.

In one way or another, you all know the social encyclicals; your representative referred to the most recent of them. The teaching contained therein has, as it were, two goals. The first is respect for the dignity of every man and woman; their right to full economic, human, and spiritual development must be recognized, and they must never be reduced to mere means or instruments to achieve other ends. The second is the value of work, “a fundamental dimension of human existence,”⁹² “a key to the social question,”⁹³ and a privileged means of development.⁹⁴ These two goals are summed up in the affirmation of justice, lived and applied at every level.

Economic Problems are Solved through Solidarity

In the light of these principles, I would like to take a clear yet calm and confident look, with you and before the Lord, at the real situation in this region of the South.

It is generally admitted that the South is not as developed as the North; that wealth is not equally distributed between the two areas; that there is not the same possibility to find proper work for proper pay; and that this causes emigration both within and outside the country with the consequences which we know.

Dear brothers and sisters, they are real problems; they are certainly complex, but not insoluble, if one has trust in God and in man. Once again I would like to

⁹⁰ *Redemptor hominis*, n. 14.

⁹¹ *Gaudium et spes*, n. 22.

⁹² *Laborem exercens*, n. 40.

⁹³ *Laborem exercens*, nn. 3, 40.

⁹⁴ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 30.

emphasize that people are of greater value than things, that profit is not the only valid criterion when there is a question of creating or developing an enterprise or selecting the type of goods one would wish to produce.

Besides, there is a duty of solidarity, not only between the less developed regions themselves, but also, and especially, between these and the regions which have already achieved the goals of higher development. It is a solidarity which should be realized at every level; it should involve also those responsible for economics and politics as well as the workers themselves and their organizations.

Revitalization of the Moral Climate

Here we are already in the moral sphere, which is precisely the sphere in which human activities are carried out, in the first place the activities which aim at development, and therefore economic activities, connected in some way with human work.

Therefore here in Calabria, a profound revitalization of the moral climate seems to be necessary, a true “ecological” environment; outside of this it is impossible to work. Neither is it possible for men and women to live if they wish to maintain a standard in keeping with their dignity. Every form of abuse, dishonesty, unjust oppression, organized crime, in so far as they are fundamentally opposed to human dignity, should be rejected and, with the Lord’s help, overcome.

Human Work Is Collaboration in God’s Plan

The true meaning of work and of the workers’ identity we find already in the first pages of Sacred Scripture, as I stressed in my encyclical *Laborem exercens*. There God himself shows that he wishes to be represented as a worker. By his word he gives being to the world in six days, and on the seventh he rests.⁹⁵ Having “formed man out of the clay of the ground he placed him “in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and are for it,” and gave the human couple a command which is the departure point of all human work: “Fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over all living things.”⁹⁶

In fulfilling this command, every person reflects the example of the Creator of the universe, so that human work appears in Scripture as a collaboration in God’s creative plan.

⁹⁵ Gen 1:3f.

⁹⁶ Gen 1:28.

Work is a Means of Sanctification

If original sin has weighed on human work and subjected it to the hardship of fatigue, the tragedy of social imbalances, the risk of being reduced to mere goods for exchange, this has not in any way lessened or destroyed its value. Indeed, Jesus, the Son of God, in becoming man, in the redemption also of work, has conferred on it, as it were, a new title of glory. He himself wished to be a worker, a carpenter, thus inscribing daily work in God's same salvific design.

After Jesus, the disciples. For example, the Apostle Paul, who first brought the gospel message to Reggio, made himself the spokesman for this gospel of work. Not only did he himself work to provide himself with the necessities of life, and not to be a burden on anyone,⁹⁷ but he condemned the idle person even to writing: "if anyone will not work, let him not eat."⁹⁸

Besides, we all know that "prayer and work" was the motto of those Benedictine monks who laid the foundation of a civilized Europe in a period of barbaric destruction.

Thus work has become a means of sanctification, when it acts as a means of one's own human fulfillment and fully respects the dignity of others.

Solidarity for Development

This is what the Church has always taught. This is what I wish to repeat today during this meeting with you, workers and entrepreneurs of Calabria.

I have already alluded to solidarity. I now wish to add that in my two social encyclicals, *Laborem exercens* and *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, I wished to highlight a dimension of solidarity which I think is of special importance for you, workers of Calabria and the South of Italy, in resolving your longstanding problems; development in solidarity.

"The development of peoples begins and is most appropriately accomplished in the dedication of each people to its own development, in collaboration with others."⁹⁹ Therefore, solidarity for development! However this alone is not enough.

⁹⁷ Acts 20:34; 18:3; 1 Thes 2:9; 2 Thes 3:7f.

⁹⁸ 2 Thes 3:10.

⁹⁹ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 44.

“Development demands above all a spirit of initiative on the part of the countries which need it. Each of them must act in accordance with its own responsibilities, not expecting everything from the more favored countries, and acting in collaboration with others in the same situation. Each must discover and use to the best advantage its own area of freedom.”¹⁰⁰ Every region concerned must “identify their own priorities and clearly recognize their own needs, according to the particular conditions of their people, their geographical setting and their cultural traditions.”¹⁰¹

32.

THE STRUCTURE AND DESIGN OF WORK MUST PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WORKER AS A PERSON¹⁰²

Collaboration with God, Culture of Work, Dignity of Work, Economic Laws and Profits, Fair Wage, Humanization/Dehumanization, Materialism and Consumerism, Meaning of Work, Unemployment.

Every meeting with the world of work, as you know, is exceedingly welcome to me, because it allows me to express how much I share the concern which the Church has for workers. However, the type of work connected with mining activity has special significance for me, since it brings me back to the years of my youth when I personally experienced the problems connected with such an industry. The latter challenges every human being to discover and exploit the stores of good things which the Creator and provident God has generously bestowed on us, his children. Also from this point of view my greeting to each one of you is particularly affectionate.

¹⁰⁰ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 44.

¹⁰¹ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 44.

¹⁰² This material was delivered as an address on May 21, 1989 in Grosseto, Italy, to workers, contractors and representatives of the world of work. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, July 3, 1989, p. 7.

Salvation and Solidarity

Beloved workers of the factories of Scarino and of the new Solmine! If you ask me what are the profound reasons which compel the Church to become involved in a direct and sharing way in your world, I will answer that they are primarily two, which are intimately connected and complementary.

The first reason is that the Church has received from Christ the mission of guiding man to salvation, orientating his involvement in the multiple sectors in which his earthly existence expresses itself and unfolds. Of this existence the vast and differentiated field of work forms an essential part. Work, therefore, forms part of the design that God has for man, a design which he has shown us in Revelation. There is a gospel of work which it is the Church's duty to preach, to ensure that man comes to an ever better understanding of his vocation and, by embracing it, contributes in a constructive way to common progress.¹⁰³

The second reason why the Church concerns herself with the world of work consists in the profound solidarity which she preaches for man and for everything that influences or determines his full realization. If the first reason is set, so to speak, on the vertical line of the salvific word of God to be communicated to mankind, the second stands on the horizontal line of the sharing of human beings of their many problems and labors. In the matter of human problems the Church has many years of experience behind her. She is able, therefore, to make an original contribution of her own in the search for solutions which would respect human dignity and be effective in promoting its authentic affirmation.

The Dignity of the Worker

For these two reasons the Church invites the worker to take note of the noble design God has on him and for him. It is important always to reflect on who it is that works, why he works, what end his labor should serve.

The worker—I mean every one of you—is not a factory mechanism, is not a labor instrument: he belongs to an order of greatness superior to all material reality, endowed, by his nature, with intelligence and freedom; in a word, he is a person. Every human person, without any discrimination, is made to the image and likeness of God the Creator, His dignity, therefore, surpasses the value of all earthly things.

¹⁰³ *Laborem exercens*, n. 26.

The Worker as Co-Creator

But there is more: the worker is called by God to insert himself into the creative plan and to become, in a certain sense, creator himself. From this flows an immediate and important consequence, one on which I dwelt in my encyclical on human labor: whatever be the level at which he operates or the category to which he belongs, the worker in the exercise of his own activity should be able to become more human, and not be degraded and humiliated as a result of his work itself.¹⁰⁴

The Standard of Justice in the Workplace

All the injustices that have been committed or that are being committed in the work area should be measured according to this fundamental criterion: the criterion of the value and the true good of the person. If this is disregarded, there is the danger that the very protests raised against the injustices may become the source of other and perhaps even greater injustices.

Structure Work to Support Human Dignity

In my own country, which, as you know, is confronting grave difficulties, someone recently stated that what we urgently need today is a serious engagement in a “work on work.”

What does “work on work” mean? It means, above all, to work on the organization of work, that is, to fashion it and to arrange it in such a way that it may serve to promote the integral development of the person. The concrete applications are, as everyone can see, many and urgent: it is necessary, for example, to see to it that everyone be assured a just participation in the fruits of his own labor; that to each individual be granted a just share of responsibility in the management of the firm or of the factory; that every industrial activity be carried out with respect for the natural environment and resources. . . . It is necessary, in particular, that the work, to which man and woman devote the best of their years and their forces, serve them as the normal means to procure not only the minimum of subsistence, but the means to live a truly human life as well. If, for example, one were forced to do more work only to arrive at a level of life that is hardly human, would he not already be a victim of an unjust situation?

¹⁰⁴ *Laborem exercens*, n. 9.

Anyone therefore who has a job in a factory, as well as in a mine or in an office, should be able to obtain access precisely through this activity to a worthy and dignified life-style as regards housing, food, health, insurance, as well as culture, free time, and spiritual and religious self-improvement. This is the criterion to distinguish between work that is “worthy of man” and the various forms—even modern forms—of exploitation.

In the light of these principles, those who have no work are in an objectively unjust situation, and society with its institutions is bound to help them find an adequate solution, rather than forcing them to resign themselves to unemployment, as through it were an inevitable phenomenon. In the unemployed it is society itself which is hurt, because it is being deprived of the valuable contribution of people who can and should be working.

The Moral and Religious Dimension Is Indispensable

“Work on work” means, in short, an effective commitment in the service of the worker. According to God’s plan, work is the path on which man is to pursue the full realization of his own humanity. In work, therefore, not only the economic dimension should be considered; the cultural, spiritual and religious dimension should also be kept in mind and turned to account, so that the worker can express in his work not only his own physical or intellectual capacities, but also his own conscience, moral principles and faith.

In this regard I should reaffirm that man, when deprived of the moral and religious dimension, is emptied of his most genuine greatness. A society which would tend to confine development to within the borders of having, aiming exclusively at material well-being at the expense of a growth in being, would not resolve the basic problems of man, who, instead of “ruling” a patrimony of goods, however great it may be, would end up becoming a prisoner, with unsatisfying consequences.

Consumerism and Solidarity

As I wrote in the encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, “the evil does not consist in having as such, but rather in possessing in a way that fails to respect the quality and the ordered hierarchy of the goods one has. Quality and hierarchy arise from the subordination of goods and from their availability to the being of man and to his true vocation.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 28.

It is clear how, in this kind of perspective, there is no room for egoism, whether individual or collective. From this outlook flows, by obvious consequence, the duty of solidarity not only with respect to those who work at the same work bench, but also towards every member of the human race.

The Necessity of Faith

Dear brothers and sisters! Faith in Christ the Redeemer, accepted and lived in its full authenticity, rebuilds in everyone the good of the freedom and of the most genuine dignity. Always remember that this faith is an indispensable factor in re-establishing internal equilibrium for individual, family, society, and nature.

Work and the Environment

I know that your firms, besides taking into account criteria of technological modernization, have concerned themselves with the ecological aspects. I hope and pray that these plants, thanks to the renewed and constant efforts of management, may become an industrial model, in which the relationship between man and environment, between worker and manager may be ever more human, in the sense of authentic development.

33.

PEOPLE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN ECONOMIC FIGURES¹⁰⁶

Dignity of Work, Human Rights/Dignity, Justice, Solidarity, Unemployment.

I thank the representatives of the Italian Government, the management of this company, and the workers for the kind words they addressed to me. I listened

¹⁰⁶ This material was delivered as an address on October 28, 1989 in Taranto, Italy, to Italian steel workers, managers, and government officers. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, November 27, 1989, p. 6.

attentively to the reference they made to the difficulties of the current situation and your concerns for the future. I am here to tell you that I share intimately in your concerns.

Concern of the Church for Justice and Humanity

I have followed daily the developments of recent weeks and, although I do not want to discuss the merits of the labor questions which brought about the recent controversy, I want to express my satisfaction for the positive solution which, it seems, has finally been reached. Unfortunately, the problems involving the steel industry are especially complex and justify your fears, considering the effects that every job cutback has on your families and the prospects of the young people who hope to take their place in the cycle of production.

The Church cannot remain indifferent in the face of this situation which concerns so many of her children placing a heavy mortgage on their present and future. Economic, technological, and political factors certainly figure in the social question; however, it has primarily directly human repercussions, which cannot be subject to the others in the search for an adequate solution. The Pope is here to recall this for all those who must make their contribution to the adoption of proper measures to confront the crisis.

This same intention impelled my predecessor, Pope Paul VI, to come to you, twenty years ago, when this steel mill was still growing. At Christmas of 1968, among these blast furnaces, he emphasized forcefully once again the necessity of combining technological progress and the search for justice, in the context of the message of "Jesus, the worker-prophet, humanity's teacher and friend, the Savior of the world."¹⁰⁷ Perhaps some of you were present then and can help us to recall that event which made Taranto the podium from which he issued, "like a trumpet blast resounding in the world," a renewed appeal to the insuppressible ethical aspect of the social problem.

Develop the Whole Person

Dear friends, in the footprints of my great predecessor, I have come to meet you today, bearing the same message from Christ and the Church.

This plant in which we are gathered and the workshops in which you labor and spend a great deal of your day are an eloquent sign of man's ability to transform raw

¹⁰⁷ *Insegnamenti*, p. 695.

materials to adapt them to his own needs. This mill, which currently employs sixty thousand people, is beginning the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone. It is a milestone which, while it marks undeniable success, also evokes timely considerations which cannot be put off; not only about operational techniques and market strategies (already underway with the creation of the ILVA Corporation) but also, and above all, about the concept of development by which they were inspired in the past.

Nevertheless, promoting the productive capacity of an industrial complex is not everything; neither is it the most important. The value and immensity of a production plant, even one as impressive as yours, must not be measured solely on the criteria of technological progress or productivity and economic and financial profit, but also, and above all, on the criteria of its service to mankind, and how it corresponds to what the true dignity of the worker, as God's image, claims and demands.

Now, then, from this point of view, what is the current situation of ILVA of Taranto? There is, first of all, the difficult problem of employment, which has been aggravated by the cutback in the productive capacity of the plant in the context of the more general crisis in steel production. There are the phenomena connected with early retirement and recourse to unemployment compensation, the latter a partial and temporary remedy for the lack of work or slow periods. I am certainly not unaware of the complex components of the crisis in the steel industry, which is a problem of international dimensions. However, I cannot fail to point out the serious consequences of this situation for the workers themselves and their families who receive their necessary sustenance from their work.

I want all those who experience such situations—men and women, and particularly the young people who cannot find work in line with their preparation—to know that I am near to each of the jobless and those who are laid off, and that I bring them the Church's understanding and solidarity. . . .

Dignity of the Human Person and of Human Work

When we have to rethink a situation such as this one, dear friends, there are two basic moral criteria which must be taken into consideration.

The first is the dignity of the human person, created in God's image: "man, in fact, is the author, center, and end of all socio-economic life."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ *Gaudium et spes*, n. 63.

The second is the dignity of work itself, which is part of the vocation of man, called to be fulfilled and perfected as a person.¹⁰⁹ Man has been given no other means by which to develop his talents and characteristics, than by earning his livelihood.

Now, all this means that work must be considered not only as a potential source of economic goods, but also as an occasion for spiritual enrichment in a process of growth towards the achievement of one's self fulfillment.

For workers this implies the moral obligation to work to the best of one's abilities, conscious not only of one's own rights, but of one's duties as well. For those who have the power to decide—management, economists, politicians—this means that the value of the worker and the dignity of work must prevail in decisions, even, and above all, in times of crisis. It is people, not numbers, that count.

Interdependence and Solidarity

It is true that decisions about the goals and dimensions of industrial complexes and their operations today must be made in the context of an economic planning that goes well beyond the limits of a single city, or even of an entire country. This is the effect of the ever-increasing interdependence of economic, commercial and financial relationships in the whole world, and especially in Europe.

However, such an interdependence has a very valuable moral result, that of solidarity, which I defined in the encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* as “the firm and persuasive determination to be engaged in the common good, for the well-being of each and every person.”¹¹⁰ This is, in reality, the way to remedy the effects of cutbacks. Whatever cannot be maintained because of the overall balance must, however, be adequately compensated in other ways, and, hopefully, in other industrial fields, in order to serve the good of all, especially the weakest, such as the jobless, those who are laid off, and those who are looking for their first job.

The new circumstances require everyone to make an effort for renewed analysis and creativity, so that the men and women of Taranto may be given new possibilities for work, possibly more suitable to the environmental situation in which they live: the so-called “service” economy, but also a renewed agriculture and all that can derive from the riches of the sea.

¹⁰⁹ *Laborem exercens*, n. 4.

¹¹⁰ *Laborem exercens*, n. 28.

Constructive Dialogue

Dear friends, I conclude with a wish for peace and justice, rooted in good will and constructive dialogue, enlightened by the Church's social doctrine and the people of the south's tradition of balance and industriousness.

Furthermore, this meal will be for me and for you a living symbol of that other meal, the Eucharist, in which Christ, giving himself to us under the form of bread, makes all of us one in him. May he be ever in your midst, sustaining your work, nourishing your hopes for a better life, and strengthening your solidarity.

34. BUSINESS NEEDS A NEW PROFESSIONALISM, RICH IN HUMAN AND CULTURAL VALUES¹¹¹

Dialogue and Cooperation, Economic Laws and Profits, Human Development/ Progress, Materialism and Consumerism, Professional Training/Responsibility, Selfishness, Work and the Worker.

Your kind presence offers me the chance to express my pleasure and appreciation at what you have done and plan to do to help the entire community. At the same time, this meeting leads me to reflect with you on the importance and delicacy of commercial activity in our times when "competition" tends to prevail over "cooperation," to the detriment of the real common good.

Need for a New Professionalism

Business today needs a broad and updated professionalism; in other words, a professionalism which is above all "qualified." As the experts say, we must move away

¹¹¹ This material was delivered as an address on September 22, 1990 in Ferrara, Italy, to business leaders and members of labor unions. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, October, 8, 1990, p. 4.

from a “job-centered professionalism” towards a “process-centered professionalism.” That presupposes not only a serious competence in the area of one’s own specific tasks, but a cultural sensitivity as well, which allows one to take stock quickly of technological progress and to gear up for it in a quick and effective way. In short, what is needed is professionalism with a wealth of operational qualities, but also rich in the human, social, cultural and ethical values which make work gratifying as well as productive.

Furthermore, professionalism in business must always be inspired by a “personalist” vision which has at heart the “human factor,” above all and before all else. Estimates and analyses are certainly necessary, along with statistical checks and technical certification; the “philosophy of total quality” is also important for a continuing improvement of the product. But a business must be especially committed to respect the primacy of the human being over work and work itself over technology, profit and capital. “To humanize” companies means, therefore, to place the human person in a privileged position by eliminating special interests, which often enough harm the community; it means to draft solutions to problems in the light of basic ethical values which remain perennially valid. This presupposes the attempts by business leaders and employees to engage in a serene and constructive dialogue with the goal of foreseeing and resolving conflicts and disagreements which ultimately harm the well-being of all.

In this light Pope Paul VI in the apostolic Letter *Octogesima adveniens*, wrote: “Economic activity which is necessary can be a source of fellowship and a sign of Providence if it is placed at the service of the human person; it is an opportunity for concrete exchanges among people, for recognition of rights, for the delivery of services, for affirming dignity through work.”¹¹²

Openness to the Transcendent

Finally, business professionalism must not exclude an openness to the “transcendent.” That is, it must take into account the destiny beyond this world of the human person, created in God’s image and redeemed by Christ. As that expert in human life, St. Augustine, stated earlier, God made us for Himself and our hearts are restless and dissatisfied until they rest in Him! A professionalism bound only to earthly interests and to the achievement of the highest material well-being risks making the person a slave to selfishness within a tiresome competitive struggle; on the other hand, attention paid to the eternal dimension of human destiny fosters mutual esteem,

¹¹² *Octegesima adveniens*, n. 46.

prompts trust and understanding, inspires works of charity and fraternal aid, especially toward the weakest and those who have less.

Begin with the Least

In the document *The Church and the Country's Future Prospects* published in 1981, the Bishop's Conference rightly urged the Christian community to "begin again starting with the least, who are the dramatic symbol of the current crisis," and with them to "discover the values of the common good: tolerance, solidarity, social justice, shared responsibility."

It is an exhortation which has value for us too, as it does for every person of good will.

May the Lord help you not to give in to the temptation to be selfish, but to find inspiration in your work in a higher motivation based on the deepest aspirations of the human being. You will thus contribute in an effective manner to the human person's integral development.

Deepen your Christian faith and be always more convinced that only by loving and following the Gospel can the authentic progress of humanity be fostered.

35.

WORK IS THE APOSTOLATE OF THE WORKER¹¹³

Christian Witness/Mission, Service.

I express my deep appreciation for the work you do; it has become so necessary especially in our day, marked as it is by great human mobility.

¹¹³ This material was delivered as an address on November 26, 1990 in Rome, to staff of Italian restaurants and international hotels. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, December 3, 1990, p. 2.

Work Is Service

In your hotels and restaurants, you welcome on a daily basis people who are traveling for a variety of reasons. In this way you come in contact with people of every race and social class and in a certain sense you come to know better the human mystery in its many expressions, with its concerns and troubles, its hopes and joys.

How many come to your establishments hoping to find a peaceful and respectful welcome characterized by understanding and friendship! That demands on your part patience and a willingness to serve, perceptiveness and prudence. May these be the traits which distinguish your profession. Try to meet the expectations of your guests by seeing each of them as your brother or sister. Kindness and politeness, professional seriousness and readiness to be of service, competence and generosity are gifts which make a positive impression and are not easily forgotten.

Apostolate in Concrete Acts

Make your work an authentic service to people and see it as your apostolate.

The Gospel reminds us that on the last day we will be judged by the love we show in concrete acts.¹¹⁴

36.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS REQUIRES A NEW ATTENTION TO THE CULTURE OF WORK¹¹⁵

Culture of Work, Dialogue and Cooperation, Human Development/Progress, Human Rights/ Dignity, Meaning of Work, Selfishness, Service, Solidarity, Spirituality.

¹¹⁴ Mt 25:36ff.

¹¹⁵ This material was delivered as an address on September 8, 1991 in Venice, Italy, to representatives from politics, culture, industry, and work. The translation was taken from *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 23, 1991, p. 3.

You are rightly worried, about promoting an ever more modern economic and social development, one which will not deaden the cultural and spiritual aspects of the human person, and which will respect nature and the environmental balance.

In truth, businesses here have continued to be involved locally and have not uprooted workers from their families and their parishes. This kind of management policy, which we could say is family-oriented, has guarded against alienation and has permitted the formation of “working communities” in which, more than elsewhere, there are present some of the typical virtues mentioned in the encyclical *Centesimus annus*: “diligence, industriousness, prudence in undertaking reasonable risks, reliability and fidelity in interpersonal relationships, as well as courage in carrying out decisions which are difficult and painful but necessary, both for the overall working of a business and in meeting possible setbacks.”¹¹⁶

All this is probably due as well to the ancient tradition of the Veneto, which is marked by love of sacrifice, by the industriousness of emigrants compelled to work in foreign lands to support their families, by the solidarity which links your residents around their parish churches. In the shadow of the church bell tower people have learned to work together, sharing every difficulty and trial. I am thinking of labor cooperatives, for the most part parochial in character, whose regulations made precise moral demands on their members. I am thinking of the workers’ first “white leagues,” formed to defend their rights, which were forerunners of contemporary social-assistance organizations.

Danger of Regression

In recent decades, however, even the Veneto has changed profoundly. Scholars call attention to the spread of significant changes in your region, not only in people’s actual behavior, but in their decision-making criteria as well: the lessening of religious practice, the existence of cultural models and life-styles typical of the secularized areas of the West and the lack of traditional forms of solidarity and altruism provide so much evidence of this process. And you ask yourselves with justified apprehension whether the lessening in the Christian inspiration of development will not in time be the cause of social and even economic regression for your land as well. The weakening of this centuries-old patrimony, which was able to join faith with daily life, cannot leave anyone indifferent who is concerned about the welfare of people in this area.

¹¹⁶ *Centesimus annus*, n. 32.

I know how attentive you are in seeking in general to resist the compelling temptation of putting profit above every other value, and I know that you are doing your best not to return to exhausting work schedules and undue extensions of the work period over the weekend and holidays, in order to keep abreast of competition.

Small and medium-sized businesses predominate in your territory, many of which originated in the transformation of the worker into an entrepreneur, as Pope Leo XIII hoped 100 years ago in *Rerum novarum*. However, it is a question of a process which, on the one hand, exalts the primacy of the intellect and the will, and on the other, can lead to an aggravation of motives and individualistic standards, giving priority to rapid development over all other aspirations. One can then run the risk of putting in second place respect for those values—e.g., rest, primacy of family and religious life, the sanctification of Sunday—to which business has until now rightly been sensitive and attentive.

Often the tensions and disturbances of society have repercussions on people's work, because through his work the individual establishes relationships and patterns of life.

In the 20th century we have witnessed a colossal attempt to organize work and human society apart from God and any relationship to the world of transcendent values. As a consequence, this has caused the human person to be uprooted from his local culture and has then led to the creation of artificial needs and models of life.

Spiritual Needs Should Be Acknowledged

Today an appeal is again being made to what in the past was denied, or at least neglected. Thus, “immaterial” needs demand to be taken into account, e.g., respect for a person's religious aspirations, appreciation for local cultures, promotion of tranquil and satisfying interpersonal relationships: in a word, a return to making room for the needs of the soul. The words of Christ are enlightening in regard to the spiritual anxiety of contemporary man: “Do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not worry anymore. All the nations of the world seek for these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these other things will be given you besides.”¹¹⁷

In the encyclical *Centesimus annus* I called attention to how the spiritual void caused by atheism was one of the principal causes of the failure of the Marxist

¹¹⁷ Lk 12:29-31.

economic system.¹¹⁸ Values motivate work, and by establishing a firm link between generations, they ensure the development of a people's civilization. However, if they are not brought back to the profound ethical roots of all human beings, they are spoiled and disappear.

The human person, searching for his own global orientation, needs decisive answers about the meaning of life. When the most interior of spiritual motivations are obscured, man is reduced to a productive machine, culture and ethnicity become "useless differences" and politics is "maximized," being changed into a type of "secular religion."¹¹⁹

Culture of Work

It is therefore necessary to rediscover a "culture of work" which is not simply dictated by productive demand, but by the global needs of the person and civil society.

To accomplish this, it is indispensable that businesses become authentic "working communities,"¹²⁰ in which initiative, entrepreneurship, and collaboration find room and development. For this reason it is necessary to protect personal rights, a topic I covered extensively in *Centesimus annus*.¹²¹ It is necessary to increase various forms of participation and dialogue and to acknowledge the proper roles of every person, restoring them to a reasonable complementarity. This doubtlessly is easier to do in small and medium-sized businesses than in larger ones, for the latter often run the risk of becoming anonymous and alienating.

A "culture of work" also means service to, and not manipulation of, consumers. The working community of a business will actually do this if it can be involved harmoniously in civil society, which is the goal of service, and if it can respond to people's real needs without creating illusory ones by manipulating certain improper forms of advertising.

A "culture of work," finally, means that management and workers are able to assume a common ethical perspective, which does not mean simply codifying some

¹¹⁸ *Centesimus annus*, nn. 24-25.

¹¹⁹ *Centesimus annus*, n. 25.

¹²⁰ *Centesimus annus*, n. 32.

¹²¹ *Centesimus annus*, nn. 6-9.

general rules of the game, but obeying the truth of the human person, who is the image of God. Thus, you are called to give vitality to the religious soul of the Veneto, which in the past guaranteed the quality of life and today deserves to be strengthened and developed.

Responsibility and Solidarity

Dear brothers and sisters, the challenge for Venice today is to make an exemplary contribution to this “culture of work.” You will be able to do so if an attitude of responsibility and solidarity always prevails in every aspect of your political and economic planning.

For this reason, continue to be welcoming, open your structures to immigrants, and learn how to develop those social virtues without which you will fall inexorably into selfish individualism, alienation, and exploitation. Christians of Venice, you have the opportunity of restoring to your brothers and sisters who are different in race, culture or religion and come among you in search of work, everything which you received from your ancestors who were once emigrants, and you can witness to the Gospel of openness and love. Jesus promises a reward to anyone who welcomes a stranger.¹²² Through this integration you will build that civilization of Gospel love, which in some way already prefigures in this world the future kingdom of God.

¹²² Mt 25:35.