

MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER POPE FRANCIS FOR WORLD FOOD DAY 2022

To His Excellency
QU Dongyu
Director-General of FAO

Your Excellency:

Thank you for your kind letter inviting me to participate in the celebration of World Food Day 2022, the seventy-seventh anniversary of the founding of FAO. This institution was set up to respond to the needs of so many people who were left suffering from destitution and hunger during the Second World War. Unfortunately, we are also living in times of war, which we could even call a “third world war”. The world is at war, and this should give us pause for thought.

The theme of this year's Conference is: “*Leave no one behind. Better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life for all*”. It will certainly not be possible to address the many crises affecting humanity if we do not work and walk the same path together, leaving no one behind. This requires, first of all, that we see others as our brothers and sisters, as members of the same human family, whose suffering and needs affect us all, because “if one part is suffering, every other part suffers with it” (cf. 1 Corinthians 12.26).

The “*four betters*” - better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life for all - that make up this year's theme lead me to mention the importance of FAO's *Strategic Framework 2022-2031*, and to highlight the need for interventions to be planned and scheduled to ensure that they contribute to the total eradication of hunger and malnutrition, and are not simply a contingent response to temporary shortfalls or emergency appeals. In order to achieve fair and lasting solutions, we need to reiterate the urgency of addressing together, and at all levels, the problem of poverty, which is closely linked to the lack of adequate food.

However, the goals we face are ambitious and apparently unattainable. How can we achieve them? Firstly, we must not lose sight of the fact that the focus of any strategy is people, with actual life-stories and faces, people who live in a particular place; they are not just numbers, data or an endless stream of statistics. Also we must introduce the category of love into the language of international cooperation, to imbue international relations with humanity and solidarity, in pursuit of the common good. We are therefore called upon to redirect our gaze towards what is essential, towards what has been freely given to us, focusing our work on the care of others and of creation (cf. Encyclical *Laudato si'*, 216 ss.).

Director-General, I renew once again the commitment of the Holy See and the Catholic Church to walk together with FAO and other intergovernmental organizations working for the poor, putting fraternity, harmony and mutual collaboration first, in order to discover outlooks that will bring genuine benefit to the world today, and also for generations to come. I lift up my prayer to Almighty God for this intention, knowing that every creature receives sustenance from His hand, and that He richly blesses those who break bread with the hungry.

Vatican City, 14 October 2022