

The Earth could sustain 35 billion human beings

The following is a summary of the speech on Christian Solidarity given by Dom Manoel Pestana Filho, bishop of Anapolis, on Nov. 14, 1992 in Anapolis, Brazil.

Christianity is not what its opponents attribute to it. It does not destroy. It tries only to maximize human perfection.

The social question is one of respect. To the pagan, work is a form of slavery, as both Plato and Aristotle conceived it. If it is paid, that is only so that man will continue to work, as one feeds a horse to keep it going. It was this slavery which the ancient societies created, where human beings were treated like cattle. But work, in Christian terms, in Solidarity, is a collaboration with God, on various levels, but all in collaboration. No one serves another. We are all brothers who respect one another. Thus, the man who sets a stone ornament in place and is asked about his labor would say, "I am building a cathedral," and yet that man has barely set one detail.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us and, let us remember, was born in the home of a worker. Imbued with this force, men began to build their monasteries upon two pillars, prayer and work, and in building the cities thus, Christian Europe was born.

The woman in pagan society was also a slave. But woman was formed from Adam's rib. Thus she is in solidarity with him, and can save or sink man. The model of all these perfections is Mary, who transformed the hearts of barbarous men. In the Middle Age, Mary, the perfect disciple, made men into builders of cathedrals. Without exaggeration, one can say that the position woman holds in society suggests the sanity or lunacy of that society.

Also in pagan society, children were thrown into the streets, their arms cut off, their eyes put out. Girls were chosen for prostitution. There were no rights for children. But God became man. And these children are going to be the center of history. Heaven is for the children. The future of any society is measured by the status of its children. A society that kills its children is committing suicide and should not even live.

Christianity transfigured man. When man forgets that he is in the image of God, he begins to self-destruct and begins in some way to hate God.



Dom Manoel Pestana, bishop of Anapolis, Brazil, addresses a conference on the Fifth Centenary of the Evangelization of the Americas and Ibero-American integration on Nov. 14.

All the conditions exist for creating a marvelous world. There is science. When I think of the economy, I am afraid; the Earth could sustain 35 billion human beings, and we can't even feed the 6 billion we are today. With solidarity, the world would be very different. With the communications media, the world could be one great family. But they have made it a global village of cannibals.

We are a social body. We are all necessary; if something doesn't work, the rest is distorted. Solidarity comes from *Solus*, unity. It is the awareness that we are one, that everyone helps as a member of this social body. But society is not a physical body, as communism sees it, where one part can be destroyed, where all is expendable. For Christians, there is something more important, because we are all of the body of Christ, we are all of the blood of Christ; solidarity is part of the supernatural. And this gives us strength against satanic forces.

Latin America is a community of the children of God, a community of culture, an awareness of history. We are all brothers, and we need to save ourselves as one. We are the Continent of Hope, as Pope John Paul II has called us. This will be brought about by means of an emerging force, through both small and great initiatives.

and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the sea and the birds in the heavens and over the beasts and all animals which crawl upon the earth.

"And God spoke: See there, I have given unto you all plants which yield seed upon the whole earth, and all trees with fruit which bring seed, for you to eat.