



NEWS LETTER

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A Good Rest for a Good Start

Holidays have finally come. They were long expected, because for some time now we had felt the need to stop, to gain new strength and deal with the hardships of a new year which is expected to be very difficult from various points of view.

Our rest, though, that we hope could truly be a time when we can restore your body and spirit, coincides with a dramatic event, which is precisely the tragedy occurring in the Horn of Africa, where millions of people, and especially children, die of hunger.

This tragedy deeply challenges us, because its solution depends also on us and our choices that are so often unrestrained.

But it also depends on the commitment of our Associations that too often are content with small things that put our consciences at ease, our consciences of distracted and superficial Christians for whom the Word of God has become a far away echo.

At the Angelus of Sunday, July 31, Pope Benedict XVI, commenting on the Gospel of the day, invited us to reflect: "The Lord gives us here a good example of His compassion for people. One therefore thinks of the many

brothers and sisters that these days, in the Horn of Africa, suffer the dramatic consequences of famine, exacerbated by war and lack of strong institutions. Christ is attentive to the material needs, but wants to give more, because man is always "hungry for something more, always needs something more" (Gesù di Nazareth, Milan, 2007,311). In the bread of Christ there is the love of God; in the encounter with Him "we eat, so to speak, the living God himself, we really eat the" bread from heaven" (*ibid.*).

Let's make this pause of the holiday really the time when we meet the Love of God and eat the bread that Providence gives us. Let's commit ourselves, through a radical change in our lives that could lead us to more sober choices, to the common good of all, so that no one lacks the necessary means to live.

Only then would we give a meaning to our holiday and be truly refreshed at our return to work to face a new year full of commitments and full of problems and opportunities.

Happy holidays, then, and see you all in full strength in September!

Vincenzo Conso

July 2, 2011

Study Seminar of the Rome Forum

On July 2, at the premises of the Forum of catholic-inspired NGOs of Rome a study session was held for all Assembly members.

The seminar was divided into two parts: the first report was presented by HE Msgr Nicola Eterovic, Archbishop / Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, and its subject was: “The New Evangelization: Problems and Prospects of the NGO’s Commitment”. The second speaker was Prof. Vincenzo Buonomo, dean of the law faculties of the Pontifical Lateran University and Head Office at the Permanent Mission of the Holy See to FAO, who spoke on “Identity and Mission of Catholic-inspired NGOs to meet the challenges of globalization”.

In the first report, Archbishop Eterovic presented the newly published *Lineamenta* of the next XIII Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which will be centered on the New Evangelization for the transmission of Christian faith and will take place in October next year.

Following the points developed by the *Lineamenta*, Monsignor Eterovic initially made a division between two types of evangelization: the *ad gentes* (for those who have not yet met Christianity) and the New Evangelization, addressed to people who have stopped practicing the faith, or practice it in a superficial way. And this second target group will be addressed by the next Synod.

After introducing the topic through an overview on the theological and ecclesiological basics of evangelization, the challenges of today’s world in this mission of the Church were presented, such as the secularization of the Western world, the phenomenon of migration, the media, the



Mons. Eterovic e V. Conso

inequitable distribution of resources, scientific and technological research, political changes. His Excellency focused on the role that education must have as a means of evangelization, and eventually mentioned some of the questions of the *Lineamenta* that should be completed by all NGOs with a view to the drawing up of an *Instrumentum laboris* of the Synod (Chapter II, questions 9, 17, 18 and 19).

Prof. Buonomo spoke of last FAO Conference held the week before this study seminar, during which he was elected the new Director of the UN Agency. Buonomo highlighted the lack of participation of the NGOs at the conference, especially during those moments when organizations could have contribute proactively (such as during the June 25 meeting with NGOs). Two issues that were brought to the attention of participants in the seminar were the rural family (a Resolution to hold the year of the rural family in 2014 has been signed), and price speculation (discussed by the Pope during his address to the participants at the Conference), stressing the crucial importance of active participation of Catholic NGOs in policy making sectors at FAO.

The requests of civil society to the “G20 Agriculture” on the volatility of food prices

On 17 June, at the Domus Mariae (Rome), the Italian Committee for Food Sovereignty (CISA) has submitted to Minister Marco Ricci (multilateral coordinator of the G20 on behalf of the MFA) and Mrs. Franca Melillo (European and policies of the MAFFP) the requests of civil society for the G20 of the Ministers of Agriculture who would discuss the “volatility of prices of agricultural products and food safety” (Paris, June 22-23)

The extensive discussion in the CISA led to a series of suggestions and requests divided according to problem areas affecting the volatility of agricultural prices and food security: financial speculation on food, bio-fuels, food reserves and commercial rules, agricultural policies and governance for food security.

On the subject of financial speculation on food, CISA reiterated its conviction that the volatility of food prices we’re seeing can not be explained only by economic reasons and is a threat to global growth. Among the various measures identified, the one on which general consensus would be essential is that on the adoption of individual and aggregated position limits per type of financial instrument in derivatives markets on agricultural commodities. On this occasion, CISA expressed its support to the ZeroZeroFive Campaign for taxation (0.05%) of financial transactions. The issue of agro fuels is indicated by all the main documents prepared by the international bodies (the draft zero for the CFS and that for the G20) as a time bomb for global food security, particularly for poor countries who are net importers of food and



could see their food demand displaced by the growing demand for agricultural products to produce agro fuels. CISA calls for the elimination of targets, obligatory mandates and financial supports that encourage the expansion of an industrial-scale production of agro fuels, ensuring that their production meets the criteria of social and environmental sustainability, and avoiding it to be detrimental to the food production. Of course, it is essential to study and continually monitor the evolution of this situation. Food stocks: According to CISA, the G20 should support a system of reserves in developing countries by providing them with financial and technical assistance, in particular, regional stocks are to be preferred in Africa, Asia and Latin America, supporting SAARC and ECOWAS regional structures that are already trying to create a system of reserves and encouraging other regional actors to do the same. The document prepared for the G20 argued that the reserves are inadequate and expensive to control price volatility. CISA believes that they are important for the food security of the poorest, but that they can not be enough

against price volatility: the complementarity of the already identified measures with the implementation of agricultural policies for small farmers and a different priority for the international trade rules are needed. At this level there is an important difference between the draft zero for CFS and the draft document for the G20: the first one argues that the WTO's trade rules were designed to encourage exporting countries when, in the 90 ' , we were facing problems of overproduction and now we should focus on food security to rebuild the credibility of international agricultural markets; the second one focuses on the belief that larger markets are more stable (even with the financial speculation which produces dizzying figures? !). In this way, it pleads the cause of what has been done up to now. As concerns the second paper, the real novelty, in our opinion, is that the demands of agricultural policies to increase production (with more or less frequent calls to small farmers) and the continuation of trade liberalization do co-exist, whereas in the past it was argued that liberalization had

to dismantle the existing agricultural policies, in order to proceed. Of course, a discussion will be necessary as to which agricultural policies and which initiatives should be undertaken, since the temptation to foster, has all but disappeared since the temptation to sell the interest of some large transnational group as a general interest is far from having disappeared, as the Holy Father, too, denounced in his audience with the delegations participating at the FAO Conference that elected the Brazilian José Graziano da Silva as their new director general. Finally, the governance: CISA believes that the G20 should be willing to consider the views of the organisations of civil society, with particular attention to those most affected by food insecurity; that it should liaise with the CDM (Civil Society Mechanism) that civil society has independently constructed within the framework of the reform process of the CFS and should not come up with alternative interlocutors, according to a procedure that manipulates and discredits the participation of civil society.



Side Event at the FAO on “Women in Agriculture”

During the FAO Conference held from June 25 to July 2, the Ad Hoc Group of NGOs accredited to FAO, which includes several organizations of our NGO Forum, organized a side event on “The vital role of women in agriculture and rural development” (June 30, Philippines Room, FAO).

The work sessions have been introduced by a report presented by Marcela Villarreal, Director of the “Gender, Equity and Rural Employment” Department. Thomas Price, a well known person to members of NGOs that have relations with the FAO, due to the fact that he handles FAO - NGOs and civil society relations, and for his availability, moderated and concluded the event.

Among the communications of the NGO, there was that held by ICRA and entitled, “Women, cooperation and quality of rural development” that we propose herewith. «The experience of which we speak has seen as protagonists a group of Vercelli rice growers belonging to Coldiretti, the Italian agricultural organization co-founder of ICRA, a group of fifteen women from a village in Burkina Faso members of a local and national agricultural organization that is part of ROPPA (Reseau des Organisations de Pro-

ducteurs de l’Afrique Paysannes de l’Ouest), the local institutions of the two organisations, in particular in the Piedmont region, in addition to the coordination of the NGO Terra Nuova, and the ItaliAfrica Network.

The meeting between Italian and African farmers, assisted by the subjects mentioned above, has allowed to focus on the productive and organizational issues of rice farming

in a plot of land of the African village. The collaboration developed in the subsequent years led to the founding, by African women farmers, of a cooperative for the packaging and sale of rice in close-by local markets, and then in the selection of seeds to improve the quality of production, always thanks to the cooperative.



Marco Foschini

This experience of decentralized cooperation required little funding, has directly involved the farmers of places where food security is really “the problem”, through a particularly vulnerable segment of the population such as women, enabling them to feed themselves and others; it is not by chance that “Africa can feed itself” is one of the programmes launched by ROPPA. An initiative that while solving production problems, allows the strengthening of professional local, national and regional organizations that treasure the

experience made and transform it into the ability to represent the agricultural and rural world. This condition is as important as the one first mentioned, to make the commitment to food safety an essential step of human development: as we Catholics say, “of an integral human development, of the development of the entire human person and of all human beings”. Another initiative, currently stalled for lack of regional funding (this time in the Lazio region), would allow a group of women from a village in Mali that would associate in a cooperative, to transform milk into cheese, an economic activity that would enhance a freer and responsible role of women in the life of their communities.

Contrary to popular belief, there is no need of huge financial resources to give “adequate” positive signals, the capacity and will to be able to invest in people, primarily those small farmers, often women and mothers, who are confronted daily with the drama of food security, starting from their “knowl-

edge” to match and compare it with the challenges ahead. Increased resources could multiply these “signals” and transform them into the engine for a really new and incisive bottom-up change of an entrepreneurship which rediscovers people and relies on them. The FAO has demonstrated the ability to implement these requirements with the program FAO / GCP/RAF/410/ITA Italian cooperation, initiated in 2009 in Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Togo. It is necessary to implement it and deploy its concrete (economic) and ideal (political) value. ICRA is a network connecting the different realities active in the farming world of the South and the North. This experience has shown to farmers in small-medium enterprises spread and tied to the food culture of their territory in developed countries that they can be very useful if they believe in themselves and, in perspective, look at a local and sustainable agriculture that the challenges of our time set as a common destiny for both the North and the South».

