

## Vatican by Augustinus

### Pope backs debtors in U.N. speech

*The Pontiff's message was a clear signal of support for the developing countries' fight against the IMF.*

**P**ope John Paul II, in a message to the United Nations on its 40th anniversary, delivered on his behalf in New York City on Oct. 18, supported the demands of Third World countries for a just and urgent solution to the international debt crisis.

"The economic, social, and human cost of this situation," he said, "is often such as to bring whole countries to the brink of breakdown."

The Pope upheld the sovereignty of nations, before supranational organizations such as the U.N., the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank, which are committed to the destruction of sovereignty. "Your Organization is not a world government," he said. "It has no true sovereignty of its own. It is meant to be an association of sovereign States. Though it has no power of constraint, it nevertheless possesses an authority based upon the highest moral values of humanity and upon the law. The events of the last forty years seem to confirm the need that such an authority should be endowed with juridical and political means enabling it to promote ever more effectively the universal common good and to bring about the triumph of the solutions of law and justice when conflicts threaten to break out between Nations. . . ."

"There is one current international problem in which the Holy See shares the concern of the members of your Organization, for it also presents an ethical and humanitarian aspect. This is the question of the external debt of the Third World, and in particular of

Latin America.

"There exists today a consensus on the fact that the problem of the Third World's global indebtedness and of the new relationships of dependence which it creates cannot be posed solely in economic and monetary terms. It has become more widely a problem of political cooperation and economic ethics.

"The economic, social and human cost of this situation is often such as to bring whole countries to the brink of breakdown. Moreover, neither the creditor countries nor the debtor countries have anything to gain from the development of situations of despair that would be uncontrollable. Justice and the interests of all demand that, at the world level, the situation should be envisaged in all its aspects and dimensions, not just the economic and monetary aspects and dimensions but the social, political and human ones, too."

The Pope's speech, read by his secretary of state, Agostino Cardinal Casaroli, was a reaffirmation of statements he had made during his Feb. 1-6, 1985 visit to Peru. That was before the inauguration of Alan García, the current President of Peru, who is now leading the fight of Third World countries for national sovereignty and development, against the murderous conditionalities of the International Monetary Fund.

In a speech Feb. 1 in Ayacucho, the stronghold of Peru's Shining Path terrorist gang, the Pope blamed the international institutions that have

fostered unemployment and poverty for the terrorism that has devastated the country. "The international community and institutions operating in the field of cooperation among nations," he said at that time, "must apply just measures in those relationships, especially in economic relations with developing countries. They have to abandon all discriminatory trade practices, especially in raw materials.

"By offering needed financial aid, they have to seek, by mutual agreement, conditions which permit aid to those peoples to get out of a situation of poverty and underdevelopment: renouncing imposing financial conditions which, in the long run, instead of helping those countries to improve their situation, sink them deeper and even can bring them to desperate conditions which bring conflicts whose magnitude cannot be calculated."

"This is the time for men of audacity!" the Pope told Peruvians, men who can ensure that "the people of your cities, your farmers . . . living in inhuman conditions" could have their basic "human dignity" affirmed by being given the means to "work." The right to work, he told them, "is demanded by human dignity" and is a "human right."

Precisely such "audacious" leadership has now emerged from Peru, and the Pope's U.N. speech was a clear signal of political support for García.

Both in Ayacucho and in his message to the United Nations, the Pontiff squarely placed himself in the tradition of his predecessor, Paul VI, whose 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio* had marked a crucial, back-handed attack against the IMF. The encyclical called for a new international lending institution whose task would be to ensure *development* of the Third World, through making available cheap and abundant credit.