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Message of the Dicastery for Evangelization on the occasion of World Tourism Day 2023

The following is the Message sent by Archbishop Rino Fisichella, pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, Section for Fundamental Questions regarding Evangelization in the World, on the occasion of World Tourism Day 2023, held every year on 27 September.

Message

“Tourism and green investment”

1. “Tourism and green investment”. It is with this expression, proposed by the World Tourism Organization, that we prepare to celebrate the 44th World Tourism Day this coming 27 September. The Church wishes to share with States, Associations and the many realities involved, this moment of particular commitment, so that the teaching of Pope Francis may increase, in a more effective and positive way, the care for creation, an essential objective for people’s lives.

Sustainable investments for the care of creation

2. In the Encyclical *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis highlights the need to be committed to sustainable investment: “Investments have also been made in means of production and transportation which consume less energy and require fewer raw materials, as well as in methods of construction and renovating buildings which improve their energy efficiency. But these good practices are still far from widespread” (no. 26).

Promoting sustainable investment is also a witness of faith that is based on respect for nature, created and entrusted to us by God. Indeed, concern for creation and its preservation is part of the biblical message. We need only take the first page of Holy Scripture in our hands to highlight this dimension. God’s creative action is, first of all, an expression of his love that spreads and culminates by involving man and woman in the same project: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and

subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food" (*Gen 1:27-29*).

Christian hospitality

3. The Christian community feels directly the need to hold meetings on the themes in question, especially in the summer time when, from many parts of the world, people set out on journeys for a period of rest, in contact with nature and contemplation of artistic beauty. It is difficult not to see in this movement a timely opportunity for the Christian community, not only to support the various organizations responsible for allowing the holiday period to be lived to the fullest, but above all to express the sense of welcome that characterizes the spirit of our communities by virtue of the faith they have lived. Tourists are particularly sensitive to how they are welcomed. They immediately perceive the familiar style of those waiting for them, and they know how to distinguish it from the often detached formal welcome of those who consider them merely customers. In a cultural context where indifference is exaggerated, it is decisive for Christians to witness a welcome that puts people at ease and makes them experience fraternity. Engaging in dialogue, taking an interest so that the holiday is an experience of peace, facilitating forms so that one has the Gospel in one's hands or readings that awaken interest in prayer and spirituality, are some signs for giving meaning to holiday time.

Sustainable economy and human dignity

4. Attention to creation enables Christians also to promote a form of economy that does not have the aim of profit maximization, which often leads to violence towards nature, with powerful repercussions on the dignity of the person. The primacy of ethics cannot be obscured by the thirst for profit. This does not mean blocking technological progress or economic development. Attention and support to sustainable investment, therefore, cannot be considered a hindrance; rather, they constitute a far-sighted outlook that paves the way for long-term projects, without descending to the myopia of immediate gain. It is necessary to give room to the creativity of the generations to enable the dignity of every person to be rediscovered. Indeed, as Pope Francis reminds us in the Encyclical *Laudato si'*, "Such creativity would be a worthy expression of our most noble human qualities, for we would be striving intelligently, boldly and responsibly to promote a sustainable and equitable development within the context of a broader concept of quality of life" (no. 192). In this process, it is especially urgent for politics to support with conviction and confidence the paths that are discovered, to discern with wisdom the most appropriate projects, which aim at the good of all and which increase quality of life, especially of people belonging to the weakest social strata.

Investments and cultural and spiritual protection

5. The Church has always recognized and upheld the value and importance of art, culture, and their protection as they enable us to know God and to keep the Christian roots alive. The way of beauty is an integral part of our mission of proclaiming the Gospel and of promoting the spiritual growth of believers. For this reason, it is necessary for investments to aim not only at mass tourism, a possible vehicle for the loss of cultural and religious identity. On the contrary, it is appropriate that while investments are focused on infrastructure, the dignity of all workers in the tourism sector should be promoted, so as to help increase the quality of their work and of tourism itself. With regard to works of art, which have been part of the heritage of humanity for centuries and which attract tourists from all over the world, it is useful to reiterate that their protection is the responsibility of all, and therefore any form of violence that undermines their preservation must be strongly condemned.

Responsible tourism for a common home

6. Economy and ecology reciprocally lead back to the "common home" in which we live and for which everyone, no one excluded, needs take responsibility in the ways proper to the role they play and the profession they exercise. Being spokesmen for a message that projects a tourism that respects the person and the environment opens the way to perceiving the goodness of the Father who reaches out to everyone with his love. Tourism operators have in their hands the possibility of offering valid and effective opportunities to rediscover a different

kind of holiday: more supportive and less consumerist; more respectful of nature and capable of contemplating beauty in its multiple expressions. Even the vacation, therefore, can become a provocation to adopt behaviours and lifestyles that help to look upwards again, rediscovering the goodness of faith, the strength of charity and the certainty of hope. It is from here that everyone must start again to give reasons for respecting nature, to commit themselves to an integral ecology.

Tourism operators, an important resource

7. Gratitude is due to all workers who make tourism their professional and pastoral occupation, for keeping this commitment alive, making Pope Francis' wish their own, so that also in view of the next Ordinary Jubilee 2025 we do not neglect to contemplate the beauty of creation in taking care of our common home, entrusted to us by God. Therefore, the preparation of the next Jubilee Year should be celebrated and lived with this care for creation, keeping the hope of building the future together.

+ Rino Fisichella

Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization

Section for Fundamental Questions regarding Evangelization in the World

26 May 2023

Memorial of Saint Philip Neri
