



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON THE SCIENTIFIC, SOCIAL AND MORAL
ASPECTS OF ALCOHOLISM***

Friday, 22 June 1984

Dear Friends,

1. I am very pleased to be able to welcome you this morning at the end of your International Conference on the scientific, social and moral aspects of alcoholism. The deep interest and expertise that you bring to the discussions on alcoholism render honour to your persons and *stimulate hope* in all those who are following developments in this field.

The conviction is becoming ever more widespread that alcoholism is *one of the worst plagues of modern society*. This understanding is in itself most salutary, but ever greater collaboration is urgently needed in order to cope with the issue. Competence in medical science, psychology, sociology and religion is required in order to render effective assistance to those who suffer from this misfortune. Hence it is evident that cooperation on the part of various experts is essential in regard both to *treatment and prevention*.

2. Whether we examine the problem of alcoholism from the viewpoint of its complex roots, or the physical condition that it produces, or the moral responsibility that may precede or accompany it, or the effects that it has on the families of those who suffer from it, from every viewpoint we see that *the problem deeply touches the human person*. The life of individuals, families, communities and society as a whole is affected, and untold suffering and anguish are involved. Physical deterioration, at times even to the point of death, psychological disorientation and spiritual problems are concrete consequences of alcoholism. Certain aspects of this phenomenon are also common to the drug abuse that ravages society. In both areas the words of Paul VI are truly applicable: "At stake is the very question of human dignity. The problem is one of multiple human

dimensions, in which the person is profoundly affected in the exercise of intellect and will, in the fulfillment of his or her true role as a human being, and finally in the attainment of a high spiritual destiny" (Pauli VI, *Allocutio ad Foederatarum Americae Septentrionalis Civitatum Comitatum de «Drug Abuse and Control» vulgo appellatum habita*, die 20 nov. 1976: *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, XVI (1976) 962).

3. For this reason I offer you this morning the full measure of my encouragement as you confront this problem. Your contributions constitute a splendid service to humanity. This is so by reason of your individual competencies which, when placed side by side, effectively assist your fellow men and women in need. But your united efforts are also capable of provoking a chain reaction throughout the world: *a deeper sensitivity* to the problem and *a greater human solidarity* in the face of the anonymity and indifference of society which in turn contribute to loneliness, discouragement and unhappiness - all of which are fertile conditions for fostering alcoholic abuse. Through your initiatives and through those of other concerned people many victims of alcoholism will know new hope, marriages will be saved, families will be reconciled and reunited. Prevention through education and rehabilitation are goals worthy of the greatest personal commitment.

4. In confronting the evil of alcoholism a large strata of society rightly recognizes *the need for recourse to God* through prayer. The Creator of humanity is indeed the provident and personal God who directs the lives of his children and comes to their assistance. Moreover, the Catholic Church on her part identifies the added divine help needed in this human situation as *the grace of Jesus Christ*, the healing power of his word and of his sacraments.

For *all the members of the human family*, no matter what religion they profess, there stands out the lofty challenge of assisting humanity to face the serious and widespread problem of alcoholism with courage, confidence and hope.

May God bless you and your families, and may he sustain you in your noble work.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. VII, 1 pp. 1899-1901.

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