

*Paul VI, Pope, 1897 - 1978:  
- To business men and executives  
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TO BUSINESS MEN  
AND EXECUTIVES

Address of  
Pope Paul VI

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National Catholic Welfare Conference  
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**SPEECH MADE ON JUNE 8, 1964 BEFORE A  
CONGRESS OF THE CHRISTIAN UNION OF  
BUSINESS MEN AND EXECUTIVES**

ON your return from your eleventh national Congress of Heads of Commercial and Industrial Enterprises (UCID) held in Naples, you come to us to express the feelings of devotion and faithfulness which inspire and sustain the union. You come to present to us the results of your activities and to renew before us the aims which guide and sustain them. You come to ask of our apostolic ministry a word of enlightenment and comfort.

We say at once that we are touched by your deference and your trust. We regard you with real respect for what you are: economic operators as they say nowadays; heads of enterprises, managers, producers of wealth, organizers of modern enterprises whether industrial, agricultural, commercial or administrative. Therefore you are generators of work, of employment, or professional training suitable for giving employment and bread to an enormous mass of workers and of collaborators. And therefore you are also transformers of society by means of the deployment of the operative forces which science, technology, industrial structure and administration place at the disposal of modern man.

Together with teachers and doctors you are among the principal transformers of society, those who have a greater influence on the conditions of life and who open up for it new and unthought of developments. Whatever the judgment that may be passed on you, your ability, your power and your indispensability must be recognized. Your function is necessary for a society which draws its vitality, its greatness and its ambition from the mastery of nature. You have many merits and many responsibilities.

You are the typical representatives of modern life which is wholly conditioned and shaped by industrial phenomena. We also

note in you a magnificent development of the human faculties which, utilized by the characteristic canons of your school, have given proof of immense and superb capacities and which further have revealed the divine reflection in the face of man and have discovered further the traces of a transcendent and dominating Thought in the cosmos, opened up by scholars for new explorations and by you for new conquests.

The position you have thus occupied is eminent, it is strategic, it is representative; and We, like anyone who looks objectively upon the historical and social reality about us, sincerely recognize your importance. And We give it the tribute of our gratitude, our praise and our encouragement for all that is good in it in very many aspects. This testimony of ours is a sign of the attitude of the Church toward the modern world, an attitude of attention, understanding, admiration and friendship.

If then we consider that you add to your qualifications as heads of enterprises and directors the qualification of Christians, our admiration becomes affectionate, not only in fact but also in sincere, simple and virile profession, and at once there rises in us the need for a conversation, the terms of which you already know and of which you feel at one and the same time the benefits and the discomfort. To introduce the term Christian in the formula which defines you is not accomplished without difficulty. The whole ideological system which sustains you is put on trial. And here we see criticism, denunciation, duty insinuate themselves into the formula itself, which is slow to resign itself to such disturbance, almost polluted in its original simple and limpid expression, almost invaded by an agent that is foreign to the system itself. What have religion, the Gospel, the Church to do in our field? Are they not heterogenous elements? Do they not come here to mix the sacred with the profane? Do they not represent a contamination of the scientific and specific discipline which governs and encloses within itself the cycle of our activity?

You have understood that there is no reason for these objections if we consider this activity as forming part of a wider activity, the proper activity of man, the moral activity; if we bear in mind the aims which your gigantic work seeks to achieve, that is to say, the life of man in its complexity and totality, in its dignity and in its superior and immortal destiny. Indeed, you have understood

that these objections bar the way into your sector of certain spiritual factors, the lack of which is to a large extent the cause of the deficiencies, of the disorders, of the dangers, of the tragedies which exist—and how they exist!—in the realm created by industrial civilization.

The Christian element, even before causing anxiety when it enters your field, finds anxiety there, and what great anxiety! Who would dare to maintain that the sociological problem, resulting from the modern organization of work is a phenomenon of perfection, of balance and of stability? Is not the reverse precisely the case? Does not our history prove it in an obvious manner? And are you not yourselves experiencing this strange result of your labors, we mean the aversion directed against you by those of whom you have offered your new forms of work?

Your enterprises, the wonderful fruits of your efforts, are they not the cause of unpleasantness and difficulties for you? The technical and administrative sides function perfectly, but the human structures do not as yet. Business enterprise, which by its nature demands collaboration, an agreement, harmony, is it not still today a clash of minds and of interests? And is it not sometimes regarded almost as a count of indictment of those who have set it up, who run it and administer it?

Is it not said of you that you are the capitalists and that you alone are guilty? Are you not often the target of social dialectics? There must be something deeply wrong, something radically insufficient in the system itself, if it gives rise to such social reaction.

It is true that whoever speaks today, as many do, of capitalism with the concepts that defined it during the last century gives proof of lagging behind the reality of things. But the fact remains that the socioeconomic system generated by Manchester liberalism and still persisting in the conception of the unilaterality of the possession of the means of production and of an economy directed toward paramount private profit is not perfection, it is not peace, it is not justice if it still divides men into irreducible opposing classes and if society is marked by the deep and wounding differences which torment it and are barely held in check by legality and by the temporary truce of some agreement in the systematic and implacable struggle which should lead to the domination of one class over the other.

You have understood what the pontifical encyclicals on social matters continually assert, that is to say, that the religious coefficient is necessary in order to give the best solution to human relations resulting from industrial organization. Not in order certainly to use this religious coefficient as a simple paternalistic and utilitarian corrective to calm the explosion of passion, which could easily become subversive, of the working class against the managerial class, but to discover in its light the fundamental insufficiency of the system which claims to consider human relations resulting from the industrial phenomenon as purely economic and self-regulating, and to suggest other relationships to integrate them and, indeed, to regenerate them in accordance with the vision emanating from the Christian light: first man, then the rest.

It is good to see how our religion, which proclaims the primacy of God over all things, thereby sets up the primacy of man in the field of temporal realities. And it is good to see this primacy, which is guaranteed by the sovereignty, indeed by the paternity, of God over man is the motive which stimulates and justifies that social dynamism, that civil progress on which industrial phenomena, either consciously or unconsciously, impresses its inevitable motion and constitutes, lastly, its most noble aspiration and its most indisputable merit.

And so you have understood many things, both trying and redeeming. You have understood that it is necessary to emerge from the primitive stage of the industrial era, when the one-sided profit economy; that is to say, the selfish economy, sustained the system and when social harmony was expected to result solely from the determinism of the interplay of economic conditions. You have understood that many evils resulting from the pursuit of human well-being, founded exclusively and predominantly on economic goods and on temporal happiness, arise precisely from this materialistic orientation of life, for which those who make the antique dialectical materialism the fundamental dogma of a bleak sociology are not alone guilty, but also all those who put the golden calf in the place which belongs to the God of heaven and earth.

You have understood that for you the acceptance of the Christian message constitutes a sacrifice, while for the human categories who have nothing, it is a message of beatitude and of hope. For you it is a message of responsibility, of renunciation and of

fear. But because that message is Christian, you accept it courageously, with trust, with the foresight which its difficult implementation demands, yes, surmounting the selfishness which is typical of the economy made a norm for itself, but reestablishing the scale of values, makes of the economy an indispensable service and even an exercise of love and confers on the businessman the true dignity of the social benefactor and the intimate satisfaction of having devoted his prodigious energies to something worthy and lasting, mankind; indeed, to something which transcends time and constitutes merit in eternity. "I was hungry . . . I was thirsty . . . I was naked . . . and you gave me to eat, and you gave me to drink and you covered me . . ." (cf. *St. Matthew* 25, 40).

You have understood. This is why your union is dear to us and why we feel honored by the visit which you are making to us. We understand very well the interior and exterior difficulties which oppose the opening up of your wills and of that of others to the elaboration of a new sociology, founded on the Christian concept of life and on the effective remaking of the economic structures in accordance with this concept.

But all the more do we praise your proposals and encourage them. To move gradually is wise provided it is forward motion. And we shall not go far to indicate its way. It has already been opened to you by the lines of the development of modern society. It is a going forward toward the common good of which the recent Social Week of Italian Catholics spoke at Pescara, and demands therefore that the individualism of interests and of mentalities be overcome, an individualism which now opposes capitalism to labor, one's own profit to the common good, the class concept to the organic concept of society, private to public economy, private initiative to rationally planned initiative, national autocracy to the international market; in a word, one's own advantage to the advantage of human brotherhood. It is necessary to have new visions, wide and universal, of the world. The very course of history urges us to do so and Christianity stimulates us, and not only at the present time, to these visions.

You businessmen have been the pilots of the formation of modern industrial, technological and commercial society. You Christian businessmen still can with new ability and new virtue be the pilots in the formation of a more just, more peaceful, more

brotherly society. You are men with dynamic ideas, brilliant undertakings, salutary risks, beneficial sacrifices, courageous forecasts. With the strength of Christian love you can do great things.

And We who are by the duty of our mission the defender of the humble, the advocate of the poor, the prophet of justice, the herald of peace, the promoter of charity, We exhort you to do these things and We bless you for it.