

## Vatican by Augustinus

### Pope lauds 'lordship over nature'

*The speech of March 24 sounds like a polemic against the Benedictine greenies led by Milwaukee Archbishop Weakland.*

An extremely important speech on the meaning of labor was delivered by the Pope on Sunday, March 24, during his visit to the Fucino valley, where the ultramodern Center of Italian Space Telecommunications has been established.

Taking off from the first chapter of Genesis ("Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the Earth, and subdue it"), the Pope defined the divine mission of human labor, stating, "Therein is indicated above all God's intention of entrusting man with the task of self-realization, conquering with his labor a true lordship over nature." He continued: "We are struck by the fact that in the Bible, God is manifested for the first time to the world and to the eyes of man as the creator, that is, as one who builds the world with wisdom and goodness. God himself appears as a worker, in the figure of the architect or even in that of a craftsman."

On the level of human existence, the Pope said, this means that "man can be himself and achieve the purpose of his life, through the assiduous commitment to transformation of himself and an operational intervention into the world around him: overcoming obstacles, projecting new conditions of existence, procuring the necessary goods for the body and spirit, bread and culture."

Turning to the Telespazio workers, John Paul II praised the conquest of ever more modern technologies, echoing the 1981 encyclical, *Laborem Exercens*, in which he pointed to space

as the future laboratory of man's work: "Please accept the expression of my grateful appreciation for all of this, and also the wish that your labor, so effectively employed for the use of space, one of the main protagonists of the development of human activities in the coming decades, shall express itself, in ever better ways, as the shaper of well-being and peace for humanity as a whole."

In his speech on labor as the expression of man's true dignity, differentiated from the lower beasts precisely because of his capacity to modify nature for the better, the Pope did not omit to denounce the problems of today—unemployment, hunger, and poverty: "We must defeat the modern enslavements and promote laws which are ever more just and adequate, in order to overcome, through everyone's commitment, the worrisome rate of unemployment. Just as urgent is the task of returning the fruits of the earth to their providential destination, that of relieving human hunger."

In response, the president of the state-owned conglomerate IRI, Romano Prodi, who had previously held a 45-minute discussion with the Pope, took the occasion to underline that new jobs can be created precisely by introducing more advanced technologies. Prodi's arguments in favor of technical innovation during the Pope's visit sound like an open polemic against some sectors of the Church close to the Benedictine order.

For example, there was a conven-

tion recently held at the Benedictine Abbey of Praglia in Padua (near Venice), where the famous "anti-capitalistic proclamation" of the American bishops' conference was presented.

In that context, the Archbishop of Milwaukee, Monsignor Rembert Weakland, one of the authors of the document, exhorted, "There is no Christian economy," a position largely shared by the Jesuit Cardinal Martini of Milan. During the Benedictine convention, IRI chief Prodi was attacked because he came out for industrial development as the way to overcome the crisis of unemployment.

Archbishop Weakland, former international chief of the Order of St. Benedict and present coordinator of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on the Economy, upon his return to the United States called for the International Monetary Fund to replace the U.S. government in providing development assistance for Third World countries.

During a meeting at the Benedictine St. Vincent's Abbey in Latrobe, Pa., Weakland said he opposes increased U.S. bilateral aid to the developing sector because that would "be tied to military security pacts" with recipient countries. Better, the former Benedictine chief advised, to have the IMF step in.

His D.C. office also reports that Weakland and his "pastoral letter" sidekicks are organizing discussions in Catholic dioceses to win support for the pastoral, which revolves around replacing the conception of Genesis, that man must have dominion over nature, with a pagan notion of man expressing "stewardship" toward nature. This is the ideological core of West Germany's neo-Nazi Green Party.

This position seems all the more difficult to sustain in the light of the Pope's Fucino speech.