

Statement by Archbishop Giovanni Benelli of the Vatican

Thursday, Sept. 26, 1974 - Rome

It is a joy for me to be associated with the welcome being extended to Mr. Cesar Chavez on the occasion of his visit to Rome and on the occasion of this meeting here this afternoon.

We are all indeed grateful to Mr. Chavez for the lesson which he brings to our attention. It is a very important lesson: to know how to be conscious of the terrible responsibility that is incumbent on us who bear the name "Christian". His entire life is an illustration of this principle; it shows a laudable endeavor to apply this principle, which means expending the effort that is required to put the Gospel into practice. What attracts our attention in a particular way is the commitment that is manifested: the commitment to work for the good of one's brothers and sisters, to be of service to them in the name of Christ, and to render this service with a full measure of all the energy one possesses.

The desire of our Holy Father, the scope of so many of his documents, is to inculcate the Christian consciousness of the relationship of the Gospel to life. He has called for men to work for the integral development of their fellow men, that is, for their full human and Christian advancement in accordance with God's plan for the natural and supernatural dignity of his own children. It is enough to read "Octogesima Adveniens" to see how the Pope has summoned Christians to take up their responsibility, to become involved in action for the betterment of God's people.

Gratitude is also owed to those who have counselled Mr. Chavez, and those who have supported him in faith in God, and love for his people. Particular gratitude goes to the Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Farm Labor, represented here today by Bishop Donnelly and Msgr. Higgins. An expression of appreciation is owed likewise to the rest of the Equipe: to Cardinals Manning and Medeiros and to Bishops Donahue and O'Rourke, as well as to the dedicated Secretary, Msgr. Mahony. Congratulations to all of you here today for your interest in the Church, social teaching, and your desire to see the Gospel live.