

Pope Quite Interested in Brazil Lula's Planetary Zero Hunger

Contributed by Brazzil Magazine
Tuesday, 21 September 2004

The Vatican has expressed interest in Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's proposal to create a Global Action against Poverty and Hunger. Cardinal Ângelo Sodario, Vatican Secretary of State and Pope John Paul II's chief adviser, attended the meeting in New York, yesterday (20), to debate this issue.

Other world leaders, such as the French President, Jacques Chirac, and the Spanish Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero were also present at the meeting with President Lula.

According to a note released this weekend by Vatican spokesman, Joaquin Navarro-Valls, Cardinal Sodano viewed "with interest" the action "proposed by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, in consonance with the Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan, and various heads of State and government and international organizations."

The note appeared in Sunday's (19) edition of the Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano.

The newspaper regards the Cardinal's participation as a reaffirmation of the commitment at the highest level of the Catholic Church "to eradicate the genuine scourge of hunger, which saps the lives and dignity of people who suffer from poverty."

The newspaper also commented that the Catholic Church "is ready to back the efforts of someone who is trying to give all men their daily bread."

For Brazilian Special Presidential Adviser, Brother Betto, the Vatican Secretary's journey to New York constitutes a "recognition of President Lula's proposal," as well as a demonstration that the initiative conforms to the ideals preached by Pope John Paul II in the war on extreme poverty.

According to Brother Betto, the Brazilian government's proposals to combat hunger were presented to the Vatican in August by President Lula's personal secretary, Gilberto Carvalho.

The adviser also pointed out that the Catholic Church has been an important collaborator in the formulation of policies to end hunger.

And he recalled the fact that each year the National Confederation of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) holds a National Collective Effort to Overcome Hunger and Extreme Poverty.

Agência Brasil

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