

UNIAPAC INTERNATIONAL MEETING

**HUNGER AND THIRST FOR VALUES  
MASTERLY ADDRESS**

**SUNDAY, 14 JUNE 2015**  
MILANO, ABBAZIA DI MIRASOLE

Angelo Card. Scola  
Archbishop of Milan

Respected Uniapac President,  
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

the title chosen for your international meeting– *Hunger and Thirst for Values* – unites two basic factors that are indispensable for every living creature.

*Hunger* and *thirst* speak immediately of the dimension of *need* that characterises the life of every man and woman. What do such elementary needs signal? First of all, they are signs of our structural fragility and our lack, a lack which, as is most obvious in new-born babies, no-one can satisfy by themselves. Even as adults, when we are able to look after our own needs, we cannot avoid that healthy obligation of having to receive from others (from creation directly, or from our fellow men and women) that which can satisfy our hunger and thirst. In this sense, our needs highlight that relationships are a factor that are constitutive of our I. There is another given factor that we cannot neglect: the experience of human fragility cannot be resolved through increasing our consumption indefinitely: nothing we can consume is able to remedy the structural “lack” (need) which characterizes the human way of being in the world. To expect to be totally satisfied by multiplying indefinitely what we consume is a technocratic myth, which nevertheless continues to be re-proposed. We are all very aware of the fact that thinking that we can rely on indiscriminate consumption has a human cost – as well as an environmental one – of incalculable reach, which can lead less and less to our satisfaction and to our happiness, and not even to the happiness of the few people who still appear to benefit from it.

At this point we see the dimension of ‘value’ emerging. Indeed, our need as a sign of our fragility documents the necessity to face the crucial question of man’s fulfilment. ‘Value’ points to the evidence that there can be no satisfaction of needs without the mediation of our work, that is, that insuperable combination of our created nature-our freedom which characterizes man’s actions.

Thus man’s need must be thought of as an open factor that goes beyond itself. As I have recalled elsewhere “*man makes a culinary art out of his need to eat, stylish clothing and social relations out of his need to be dressed, architectural knowledge and a way of transforming the environment out of the need to take shelter etc. This reveals that man, in relation to specific situations of need, doesn’t only answer with pre-conceived reactions, but is always, to some degree, stretching out to overcome something, or to make a project, both through work and also through the attribution of cultural meanings to whatever he himself does*” (A. Scola, *Cosa nutre la vita?*, Centro Ambrosiano, Milano 2013, 57-58).

By referring to ‘value’, therefore, it is easy to understand the necessity to grasp needs in their ultimate nature, in other words, in light of the desire for fulfilment (the scholastics called it *desiderium naturae*) which characterizes us as human beings.

This *given* asks all of us – individuals, families, social entities, intermediate levels of civil society, institutions... – to fully take on their educative task, according to their responsibilities and competences.

Expo 2015, in this sense, can become a great educational opportunity for all its visitors and, in particular, for all the Milanese. This educational opportunity can demand firstly a serious reflection on all the topics concerned: food, energy, the planet, life, all of which centre on the human plea. We need to go beyond what we already know and the illusion that we are able to grasp all the intricacies of the ‘mystery’ of life and man. Indeed, it is always possible to take a step further into this mystery. But it is also necessary to enact experiences and virtuous actions able to educate through being involved – at a personal and community level – in new styles of life. We cannot continue to ignore this urgency if we want to follow the Pope’s invitation to create “a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few.» (*Evangelii gaudium* 188).