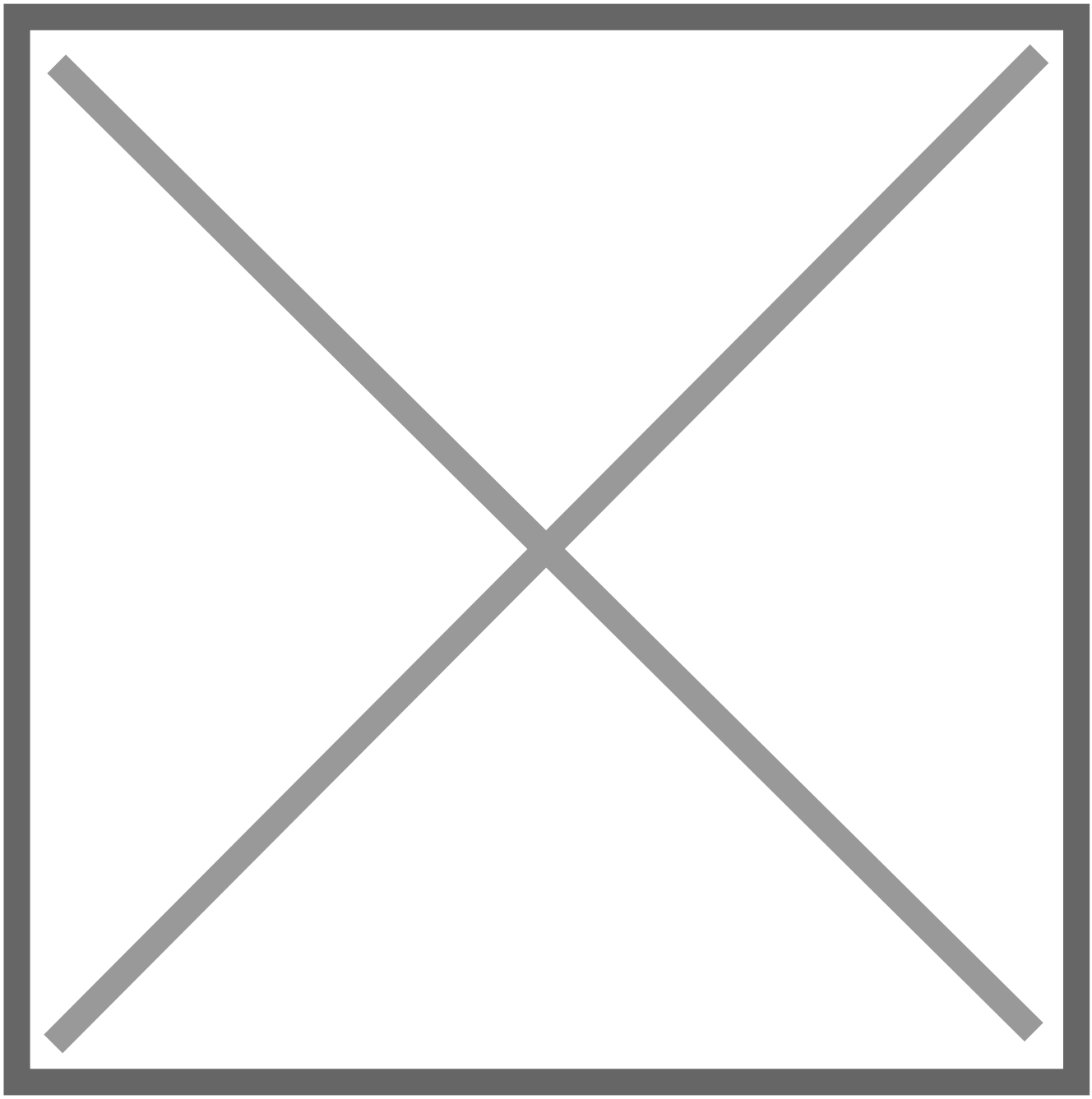
Vatican
Francis, the comic strip



Farmers harvest rice at a field in Bhaktapur, Nepal, Oct. 16, 2020, World Food Day. Pope Francis addressed the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization on World Food Day. (CNS photo/Reuters/Navesh Chitrakar)

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Repeating a call first made by St. Paul VI, Pope Francis urged a global move to divert money from national military spending and use it to "definitely defeat hunger."

Addressing representatives of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization Oct. 16, World Food Day, Pope Francis seemed to go a step further than St. Paul VI, who — in his 1967 encyclical "Populorum Progressio" — asked "world leaders to set aside part of their military expenditures for a world fund to relieve the needs of impoverished peoples."

Pope Francis, in his recent encyclical "Fratelli Tutti, on Fraternity and Social Friendship" and in his video message to the FAO, said that "a courageous decision would be to use the money spent on arms and other military expenditures to constitute a 'Global Fund' so that we can definitively defeat hunger and help the development of the poorest countries."

As the U.N. agency celebrated its 75th anniversary, Pope Francis told staff and members, "Your mission is beautiful and important, because you are working to defeat hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition."

The task is getting more difficult, he said.

"Unfortunately," the pope said, "we note that, according to the most recent statistics from the FAO, despite the efforts made in recent decades, the number of people

facing hunger and food insecurity has grown and is growing, and the current pandemic will further exacerbate these figures."

"For humanity, hunger is not just a tragedy, but a shame," he said.

"For the most part, it is caused by an unequal distribution of the fruits of the earth," the pope said. In addition, a lack of investment in agriculture, climate change and conflict all make the situation worse.

"Faced with this reality, we cannot remain insensitive or paralyzed," he said. "We are all responsible."

Wasting less food, distributing food better and spending less on weapons, the pope said, would mean fewer people would go hungry and fewer would feel forced to emigrate in search of the means of a dignified existence.

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