Men are pictured in a file photo eating a free meal in the cafeteria of a Franciscan-run soup ki

Men are pictured in a file photo eating a free meal in the cafeteria of a Franciscan-run soup kitchen in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn, N.Y. The U.N.'s celebration of World Food Day is Oct. 16. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)



by Catholic News Service

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Success in eradicating hunger will require acts of love and solidarity, not just carefully planned and executed international programs, Pope Francis said.

"This requires, first of all, that we see others as our brothers and sisters, as members of the same human family, whose sufferings and needs affect us all," the pope said in a message Oct. 14 to a ceremony in Rome ahead of the U.N. celebration of World Food Day Oct. 16.

The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization's latest estimate puts the global hunger figure for 2021 at between 702 million and 828 million people.

"These estimates imply that, since 2015, the increase in the number of undernourished people in the world has practically eroded all progress that had been made during the preceding decade, bringing the world back to hunger levels that prevailed in 2005," the organization said.

The theme chosen for the 2022 World Food Day was "Leave no one behind," and official events looked at ways to ensure that by promoting "better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life."

"Certainly, it will not be possible to face the numerous crises affecting humanity if we do not work and walk together, leaving no one behind," the pope wrote in his message.

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The goal of drastically reducing poverty and ending hunger "are ambitious and seem to be unattainable," the pope said. "How can we achieve them? First of all, by not losing sight of the fact that the focus of any strategy is the people, with concrete stories and faces, who live in a given place; they are not numbers, data or endless statistics."

Second, he said, "the 'category of love' must be introduced into the language of international cooperation, to clothe international relations with humanity and solidarity, in pursuit of the common good. We are therefore called to refocus our gaze on what is essential, on what has been freely given to us, focusing our work on care for others and for creation."

Caritas Internationalis, the umbrella organization for national Catholic charities, also issued a statement marking World Food Day.

Aloysius John, secretary-general of Caritas Internationalis, called on the international community to support "new forms of small-scale agriculture, create social food cooperatives, and enable small-scale farmers to cultivate their land. This means a change in agricultural development projects, with a focus on watershed management and access to sustainable agricultural materials."

World food production is being negatively affected by three major factors: the climate emergency, COVID-19 and conflicts, the Caritas statement said.

In addition, John noted, "this World Food Day 2022 is marked by the war in Ukraine, which has contributed to the upheaval in global food and energy markets, with soaring food and fuel prices which will further put millions at risk of hunger across the world."