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Female fish vendors in India face numerous challenges as they work to support themselves and their families. (Wikimedia/Creative Commons/CC BY-SA 3.0/Jorge Royan)

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Vatican City — November 12, 2024
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Predatory practices and technology for the benefit of the powerful few have disrupted the relationship between human labor and the natural environment, said Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

"A technological development can exist and be pursued that is capable of upholding the dignity and security of labor, and restoring a balance between individuals, work and the environment," he said in a message for World Fisheries Day, which is observed Nov. 21.

"Lawmakers, too, can stand back from the great interests of a few and intervene on behalf of small communities, family businesses and organizations of fishers who, given suitable assurances, are in a position to contribute more directly and effectively to the common good," he wrote.

The message, released by the Vatican Nov. 12, was dedicated to the verse from Genesis, "Let the water teem with an abundance of living creatures" (1:20).

This creative command, however, "has been violated by intensive fishing, which is excluding those who for centuries have cared for the riches of seas, rivers and great lakes," the cardinal wrote.

"Age-old equilibria between human labor and the natural environment have been disrupted by predatory practices and the use of technology for the benefit of an increasingly influential and powerful minority, unconcerned for the medium- and long-term effects of this lethal economy," he wrote.

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"The Church shares in the joys and hopes but also the sorrows and grief of a humanity called at this moment in history to rediscover fraternity as a social and political reality and the culture of encounter as an alternative to the globalization of indifference," he said in his message.

"Christians cannot look the other way when entire ecosystems are menaced by practices that prove devastating and impoverish even to the point of starvation peoples who already suffer from discrimination and conflict," he added.

"The Church would like fishers throughout the world to sense her accompaniment and support," Czerny wrote, because "theirs is a vocation to care for the sea, which must be protected within the purview of an integral, widespread and people-oriented ecology."