



# The Holy See

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## **ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO THE MEMBERS OF THE TRILATERAL COMMISSION\***

*Monday, 18 April 1983*

*Dear friends,*

1. It is a pleasure for me to meet the members of the Trilateral Commission, and it is also, and perhaps especially, an occasion for reflection. For I am aware that you represent a rare concentration of ability, expert knowledge and experience. This great accumulation of knowledge in the political, economic, financial and sociological spheres provides you with the means of considerable power. And how can power be exercised morally if it is not accompanied by *an acute sense of responsibility?*

It is not for me to interfere in your technological researches. However, the subject of your work is so closely connected with human beings that you constantly find yourselves at the frontier between technology and ethics. In this respect I am very much interested in your work on East-West relations, international co-operation, the search for peace in the Middle East, and arms limitation, as well as other issues. This ethical dimension of your activity is heightened by your geographical origins. You all come from the wealthy parts of this world, and for this reason you have a responsibility for encouraging people to face their duty of *international human solidarity*, for, as my predecessor Paul VI said in his Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, "This duty is the concern especially of better-off nations" (PAULI VI *Populorum Progressio*, 44). Again, when one speaks of human solidarity and politics, and international solidarity and politics in particular, one cannot forget the words of John XXIII: "the same moral law, which governs relations between individual human beings, serves also to regulate the relations of political communities with one another" (IOANNIS XXIII *Pacem in Terris*, III). *International solidarity applies* not only to the relations between nations but *also to all the instruments of relations between nations*, including those at the level of government and of multinational companies. In every sphere there are *ethical and moral exigencies*. These ethical and moral exigencies touch the many factors of technology and bear directly on the productivity and profit of enterprises, as I have alluded to in *Laborem Exercens* (Cfr. IOANNIS PAULI PP. II *Laborem Exercens*, 17). In a word, all activity must be at the service of life - the life of individuals and communities wherever they may be - and this activity must not violate the laws of life, the generation of life, the dignity of life, especially the life of the poor.<sup>2</sup> I am pleased to learn that you are spending these days discussing a study of strategies

of development - a study which must emphasise the double effort to be made: on the one hand by the poorer countries, to secure their self-development; and on the other hand by the richer countries, to create economic and trading conditions that will help to meet the essential needs of the people in the developing regions, and that will also favour a *more just sharing of resources*. But here I ask myself a question - a question that I put to you as well: why, at the end of the first third of the Third Development Decade is the global situation of North-South relations more alarming than it was at the beginning of the sixties? *Why is the gap between rich and poor constantly growing wider?* In reply, one may point to the energy crisis of the seventies, which brought the developed world itself face-to-face with a striking number of social challenges. Permit me to mention, as a complement to this, the inadequate attention given to one of the main themes of *Populorum Progressio*: "The integral development of the human person". It is an illusion to pursue solely material development. Everything, including the dynamisms of production and profit themselves, is rooted in the awareness of human dignity. Attacking this dignity weakens all efforts for development. On the other hand, creating social, cultural and spiritual conditions which protect people from all situations of oppression, exploitation and degrading dependence is a *guarantee of the success of development projects*. "In brief, to seek to do more, know more and have more in order to be more" (PAULI VI *Populorum Progressio*, 6)). 3. In addition, *peaceful relations between peoples* equally figure among your concerns. This is a matter much more closely connected with development than appears at first sight, for the ethical truth that I have just evoked is at the root of authentic peace. Certainly, one must not neglect the patient efforts of negotiators, or studies full of technical solutions that would make it possible to fix the balance of power at an ever lower level. On numerous occasions I have encouraged them. At the beginning of the year, I devoted a Message to *the importance of dialogue* as a means for guaranteeing security. This presupposes, of course, that such dialogue is sincere, is without deception, and is free of any intention of deceiving the other party. Here I would repeat in your presence what has already been proclaimed before the United Nations: "The production and the possession of armaments are a consequence of an ethical crisis that is disrupting society in all its political, social and economic dimensions". Peace, as I have already said several times, is the result of respect for ethical principles. True disarmament, that which will actually guarantee peace among peoples, will come about only with the resolution of the ethical crisis. To the extent that the efforts at arms reduction and then of total disarmament are not matched by parallel ethical renewal, they are doomed in advance to failure. "The attempt must be made to put our world aright and to eliminate the spiritual confusion born from a narrow-minded search for interest or privilege or by the defence of ideological claims: this is a task of first priority if we wish to measure any progress in the struggle for disarmament. Otherwise we are condemned to remain at face-saving activities" (IOANNIS PAULI PP. II *Nuntius scripto datus de apparatus militaris imminutione ex condicto facienda, ab Augustino S.R.E. Presbytero Cardinali Casaroli, a publicis Ecclesiae negotiis, in plenario conventu organismi ONU nuncupati, recitatus*, 12, die 7 iun. 1982: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VI/2 [1982] 2141). As you see, in the spheres with which you concern yourselves with competence, *it is impossible to separate technology and ethics*. Without the aid of ethics, political activity does not secure the common good but becomes an unbearable and detestable exploitation of man by man. And so I would urge you to continue with good will your efforts and researches without ever neglecting or transgressing the moral dimension of international relation - and to do everything for the service of the human person. And may God, the Creator of the human person and the Lord of life, render effective your contribution to humanity and implant peace in your own hearts.

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