



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PLENARY
OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

30 October 1998

*Dear Cardinal Arinze,
Your Eminences,
Dear Brother Bishops,
Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

1. I am pleased to have this opportunity to greet you, the Members, Consultors and Staff of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, on the occasion of your Plenary Assembly. We meet today in the context of the fast approaching Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, that special moment of grace and joy when the whole Church will send up a great prayer of praise and thanksgiving to the Father for the priceless gift of the Redemption which Christ has won for us by his Incarnation, Death and Resurrection.

We shall soon be entering the third and final year of immediate preparation for this unique event in salvation history, a year which will focus on the Person of God the Father, by whom Jesus Christ was sent and to whom he has returned (cf. Jn 16:28). A particular aim of this final preparatory year, as I pointed out in the Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, is to broaden the horizons of believers, so that the whole of Christian life may be seen as “a great pilgrimage to the house of the Father”, a journey of faith which “takes place in the heart of each person, extends to the believing community and then reaches to the whole of humanity” (No. 49).

2. In order that this “broadening of horizons” may properly be achieved, there is needed a conversion of heart, *metanoia* — which fittingly enough has been the subject of your reflections during these days. For the human heart is the starting-point of this interior journey and has an essential role in every religious dialogue. Your discussions therefore serve a very important

purpose. They will help the Church to be ever more fully and effectively engaged in dialogue with our brothers and sisters of different religious traditions, especially Muslims and — building on the recently concluded Special Session for Asia of the Synod of Bishops — the followers of Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, and those ways of thinking and living which were already rooted in Asia before the arrival of the Gospel in those lands.

Your reflections are appropriately situated in the overall context of “The Dialogue of Spirituality and the Spirituality of Dialogue”, the continuation and deepening of the theme of your last Plenary Assembly. Indeed, authentic and lasting conversion of heart cannot be brought about except in a spirit of prayer. “Prayer is the bond which most effectively unites us: it is through prayer that believers meet one another at a level where inequalities, misunderstandings, bitterness and hostility are overcome, namely before God, the Lord and Father of all” (*Message for the 1992 World Day of Peace*, 4). Hence we can also appreciate the importance of Christian communities of prayer, especially contemplative communities, in multi-religious societies. As well as bearing witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ, such communities become bridges of fellowship and solidarity, fostering fruitful dialogue and cooperation between Christians and the followers of other religions.

3. We are at the threshold of a new millennium which opens with the challenge to the Church to reap the copious fruits of the seeds planted by the Second Vatican Council. With the Council Fathers, I exhort you and all the sons and daughters of the Church: “Enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians” (*Nostra Aetate*, 2). In this way, the Church will be attentive to the work of the Spirit in the hearts of other believers. Thus shall we be able to build on past achievements, consolidate present efforts, and encourage future cooperation among all who seek transcendent truth.

Invoking upon you the intercession of Mary, Queen of Apostles, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.