



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO A GROUP OF NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LAUREATES*

Thursday, 22 April 1999

Mr President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am pleased to welcome this distinguished assembly of Nobel Peace Prize laureates as you gather in Rome for important days of reflection on the political challenges of the coming century. I greet in particular His Excellency Mr Mikhail Gorbachev, President of the Foundation for Social, Economic and Political Research, which has organized this international colloquium. I am most appreciative of the cordial greeting which he has addressed to me in your name.

2. The question of peace is at the very heart of political life. For this reason, your meeting is taking place at an especially tragic moment for Europe. How can we fail to renew a vigorous appeal for an end to the ethnic conflicts in the Balkans and the clash of arms, for a return to dialogue and respect for the dignity of all persons and all communities, in the name of fundamental human rights! Nor can we forget the human tragedies occurring in so many other areas of the world, especially in Africa and Asia. The important work which you have carried out in the service of peace and reconciliation has given you continued responsibility in the struggle for the recognition of the inestimable value of each human being, the formation of consciences and the growth of fraternal and peaceful coexistence between individuals and peoples. Coming together as you do from different cultures and nations, your meeting is a sign that peace can only come about when we move beyond visions of man and society based on race, religion, nationalism or, more generally, based on the exclusion of others. The search for peace requires an openness to the experience of our brothers and sisters, and an effective commitment to respect their dignity and freedom.

3. As we prepare to enter a new millennium, humanity needs to be encouraged to advance decisively along the paths of real and lasting peace, and to build a civilization based on the desire for a coexistence which respects the diversity of peoples, their histories, their cultures and their

spiritual traditions. Rather than feeding new antagonisms, globalization must lead to a rejection of armed conflict, narrow nationalism and all forms of violence.

This is the condition for the growth of an authentic solidarity, one which enables everyone to realize that peace requires the acceptance of diversity, the rejection of all aggressive behaviour towards others, and the desire to build an ever more just and fraternal society through dialogue and cooperation. Peace is not a vague idea or a dream; it is a reality which must be painstakingly constructed day after day through the efforts of all. To seek peace is one of the most noble goals for which an individual can strive within his or her nation and within the international community. Those who seek to be peacemakers should be strongly supported, since their efforts are aimed at creating a better life for everyone, a society in which each person has his or her place and in which all can live in peace and harmony, developing the gifts received from the Creator for their own personal growth and for the common good.

4. For Christians, the basis of human dignity is found in God's love for each person, without exception; and true peace is a gift constantly offered and constantly received. Despite the violence and the many threats to life which our world is experiencing, during this year which Catholics have dedicated to God the Father of mercies, the Church wishes to proclaim a message of hope in the future of mankind. She urgently invites all people of good will to join fearlessly in building the "civilization of love, founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice and liberty" (cf. Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 52), and never to lose heart in the face of obstacles or setbacks.

May God bless you and your families, and may he guide your efforts in the service of peace, reconciliation and fraternity between peoples!

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