



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE TAKING PART
IN THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING UNIV 2003**

Monday, 14 April 2003

Dear Young People,

1. I am pleased again this year to welcome all of you who are involved in the Christian formation activities promoted by the *Prelature of Opus Dei* in many countries of the world. You have gathered to spend Holy Week in Rome and to take part in the international meeting of UNIV. I cordially greet you and I hope these days in Rome will give you the opportunity for a renewed encounter with Jesus and a strong experience of Church.

For your University Congress you have chosen the theme: "*Building peace in the 21st century*". This is a particularly timely topic in these months in which we have been anxious about the many hotbeds of violence and war, in addition to the situation in Iraq, which have flared up also on other continents. All this makes the need for a true education in peace more urgent.

2. For believers, the first and fundamental pro-peace action is *prayer*, since peace is a gift of the love of God.

Yesterday, Palm Sunday, *World Youth Day* was celebrated in all dioceses. In my *Message* to young people for that occasion, I asked them, in this time endangered by violence, hatred and war, to endeavour to witness that it is Jesus who can give true peace to human hearts, to families and to the peoples of the earth.

The four pillars on which peace must rest are *truth, justice, love and freedom*, as Bl. John XXIII taught in his Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, whose 40th anniversary we celebrated a few days ago (cf. n. 35 [1963]).

3. To build peace, it is necessary first of all *to live in truth*. May you, young people, have the courage to question yourselves seriously on the meaning of life; train yourselves to think and act clearly and rightly, with respect for and in dialogue with others. Make your priority that true relationship with God which demands personal conversion and openness to his mystery. The human person understands himself only in relation to God, who is the fullness of truth, beauty and goodness.

St Josemaría Escrivá notes: "Some people try to build peace in the world without putting love of God into their own hearts. How could they possibly achieve peace in that way? The peace of Christ is the peace of the kingdom of Christ; and our Lord's kingdom has to be based on a desire for holiness, a humble readiness to receive grace, an effort to establish justice, a divine outpouring of love" (*Christ Is Passing By*, 182).

4. *Justice* should be combined with truth and with respect for the dignity of every person. We know, however, that without sincere and disinterested *love*, justice itself would not be able to guarantee peace to the world. Indeed, true peace blossoms when hatred, resentment and envy are uprooted from the heart, when one says "no" to selfishness and to all that drives the human being to withdraw into himself and defend his own interests.

If love, the distinctive sign of Christ's disciples, is expressed in gestures of free and disinterested service, in words of understanding and forgiveness, the peace-bringing wave of love expands until it embraces the entire human community. It is then also easier to understand the fourth pillar of peace, that is, *freedom*, the recognition of the rights of persons and of peoples and the free gift of self in responsible fulfilment of the duties incumbent on each person in his or her own state of life.

5. Dear young people of UNIV! If you seek to follow this path, you will be able to make an effective contribution to building a "pacified" and "pacifying" world. Your holy Founder writes: "The task for a Christian is to drown evil in an abundance of good. It is not a question of negative campaigns, or of being anti anything. On the contrary, we should live positively, full of optimism, with youthfulness, joy and peace. We should be understanding with everybody" (*Furrow*, 864).

Follow this teaching, accept the peace that Christ gives to those who open their hearts to him and spread it in every walk of life.

May Mary, *Regina Pacis* (Queen of Peace), watch over you, your aspirations and your plans, and over your families and the countries from which you come. May your holy Founder and your heavenly Patrons help you. I hope that you will prepare yourselves to celebrate Easter with faith, and I bless you all from the heart.

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