



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE "WORLD CONFERENCE ON
RELIGION AND PEACE"**

*Consistory Hall
Thursday, 4 July 1991*

*Your Eminence,
Dear Friends,*

With great joy I greet this delegation of highly qualified representatives of the religions of the world and members of the International Council of the *World Conference on Religion and Peace*. I would assure you that I follow closely the activities of the Conference in favour of interreligious dialogue and cooperation. I am happy to note that within your organization there are also many Catholics who are making a positive contribution to the work of increasing understanding among believers of all religions.

During your meetings of the past few days in Rovereto you have been discussing the theme of education for peace. Now in Rome you are engaged in an exchange of ideas on how to bring about conditions for peace in the Middle East, and you will continue your discussions in Assisi. I pray that the special significance of that city, marked by the spirit of Saint Francis - in his own lifetime an ambassador of peace - will provide you with inspiration and encouragement. I recall the World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi in 1986, during which we reflected on the harmony desired by God the Creator, on mankind's longing and hope for lasting peace, and on the love which the peoples of the world must learn to have for one another, and which has its only sure foundation in God's will and in his gifts.

It is my great hope that the religions of the world will increasingly engage in a dialogue of understanding and peace on the basis of the many values which they share. As I wrote in this year's [Message for the World Day of Peace](#): "When undertaken in a spirit of trust, and with respect

and sincerity, interreligious cooperation and dialogue make a real contribution to peace . . . This common search (for answers to the world's problems) - carried out in the light of the law of conscience and of the precepts of one's own religion, and confronting the causes of present-day social injustices and wars - will lay a solid foundation for cooperation in the search for needed solutions" (John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1991*).

The recent conflict in the Middle East has clearly shown that the *path of war* resolves no problems. Rather it increases hatred, violence and suffering. What will resolve the problems assailing humanity today is the *path of peace*, a way of walking together and facing human crises in a spirit of dialogue and solidarity. The *path of peace* is not an easy one. It demands courage, patience and determination, and must be built, as you are well aware, upon a true education for peace.

Education for peace is above all education in the truth of the human person, created by God, who made us all brothers and sisters in the one human family. Without genuine respect for the life, dignity and fundamental rights of each individual, there will be no peace. All religions are therefore called to "offer the unanimous witness of our common convictions regarding the dignity of man" (John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus, 60*). Education for peace demands teaching and learning the non-violent ways of dealing with tensions and of fostering justice in human relations. These are dialogue, negotiation, cooperation and solidarity.

As believers, our first conviction about peace is that it is a gift from God, for which we must pray with pure hearts and humble hope. Those who pray from the depths of their heart for peace cannot but commit themselves to the realization of this peace for all peoples.

For Christians, peace is a legacy handed on to us by Jesus Christ. Whenever we gather in worship, we recall his words: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you" (Jn. 14:27). We know that our actions are judged on the basis of his promise: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Mt. 5:9). We also realize that the work of establishing true peace lies at the heart of our religious commitment.

May God assist and support your efforts. On my part, I invoke the abundant blessings of God on each one of you and your families. O God, make us signs and instruments of your peace!

