



## The Holy See

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*Address to the members of the eighty-fifth class of the NATO Defense College\**

*2 June 1995*

Fifty years ago in Europe, the hostilities of the Second World War were coming to an end. The celebrations of this event are an opportunity to meditate on the causes and effects of this war. However, they have not been able to take place in a peaceful context as all men and women of good will would have liked. On the European continent, peoples are still fighting one another today and the innocent are victims, wounded not only physically by weapons but also in their hearts because of hatred and violence.

Diplomats and soldiers from many member countries of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, you have come to Rome to perfect your professional skills, and also so that through you, your respective peoples may know and appreciate one another better in the light of your essential mission, which is to build peace.

In this task, the diplomat and the soldier naturally have different functions, but they have a single goal: to create a more human society, more just and therefore more peaceful. In their efforts to succeed, they are challenged by the demands of their responsibilities, which are not limited to the defence of the legitimate interests of their nations but which make them the builders of an international community worthy of the human person.

A just international society depends on the moral conscience of those who are leaders at any level. May I remind you that your conscience cannot escape the truth nor avoid its personal responsibility before God and history. As you know, the causes which led to the Second World War were not only the issues of national or strategic concerns, but there was also a blurring of the moral conscience which became unable to recognize and respect its equal in every human person, whose fundamental dignity is to be in the image of God. This is why, today as in the past, in order for the European continent to rediscover peace it is indispensable that consciences be

reawakened, so that each may assume his responsibilities, on the basis of principles such as respect for others, protection of the poor and the underprivileged, defence of life, solidarity, generosity and magnanimity. All this is summarized for the Christian in the commandment to love one's neighbour.

May God go with you and your families! May he bless your efforts!

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