



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF INFORMATION
AND INITIATIVES FOR PEACE (COMIN)**

Friday, 5 March 1999

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Welcome to this meeting which you have so desired! Thank you for your visit, which is meant as an expression of your esteem for and devotion to the Successor of Peter and his Magisterium. I am particularly grateful to your President, Prof. Giovanni Conso, for his kind address on behalf of your committee members and everyone present. His words show the praiseworthy efforts made by your association and the zealous way you all put your skills at the service of the cause of peace and the search for better ways to achieve right cooperation between persons and peoples.

To promote the precious good of peace and to safeguard it when it is endangered, you have chosen to be present, through the appropriate diplomatic channels, in the situations most at risk, offering the leaders of nations in conflict scientific and moral information and aid helpful towards an equitable solution to the problems.

2. In our time, scientific progress, achievements in space, the ease and speed of communications, greater knowledge among peoples, the end of the ideologies that dominated the 20th century and ever more complete information about the tragedies they have caused has given rise to a horror of war among large segments of the world population, as well as a deep desire for peace. At the same time, the conflicts which unfortunately still cause bloodshed in various parts of the globe are seen as an offence to personal dignity and a powerful blow to the legitimate aspirations of the men and women of our time.

This sentiment needs to be constantly fostered and encouraged, because it is only by rejecting every form of violence and by sincerely seeking a coexistence in which relations based on force

are replaced by the effort to collaborate that the indispensable premises can be laid for building a civilized and fraternal world.

This convinced aspiration for peace is closely linked to the achievement of certain essential conditions for its growth and consolidation, identified in substance with defending human rights, without which the seeds of instability, rebellion and violence inevitably multiply. These rights, which are civil and political, but also economic, social and cultural, concern all phases of human life and should be respected in every context. They form a unified whole, definitely aimed at promoting all aspects of the good of the individual and of society, and should be promoted in a systematic and integral way. In fact, only the defence of their universality and indivisibility can encourage the building of a peaceful society and the integral development of nations.

3. Respect for human rights is closely linked to respect for the rights of God. There will be no future of peace for a society that does not respect God. This is tragically proved by the terrible events humanity has lived through in this century now ending. Wherever atheism was propagated and imposed with force, the desire to eliminate God too often coincided with contempt for human dignity.

This is why every human community that longs for peace must base its social harmony on the acknowledgement of God's primacy and on respect for freedom of worship. Religion responds to a person's deepest aspirations; it determines his view of the world, guides his relations with others and offers an answer to the question of the true meaning of life both personally and socially. Consequently, religious freedom is the heart of human rights and must be held in the highest regard by individuals and States.

4. Ladies and gentlemen, peace is an ideal to be cultivated in the heart of humanity! The effort to overcome the causes of conflicts must be accompanied by the constant action of believers and people of good will so that the culture of peace will grow, especially among the new generation. I am well aware, in this regard, of the many courageous initiatives in which, without personal interest, you work to instil in leaders and ordinary citizens convinced support for projects of reconciliation and fraternal solidarity.

I urge you to continue in this direction, increasing the occasions for dialogue and education in peace in the most varied situations and never letting yourselves be discouraged by the inevitable obstacles. May you be sustained by the word of Jesus, who called peacemakers blessed, promising them a new relationship with God and the joy of feeling part of a humanity which is reconciled and united in the Father's love (cf. Mt 5:9).

With these wishes, as I entrust each of you, your families and your efforts to the One whom the Christian people invoke as Queen of Peace, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you.

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