



The Holy See

**LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE BISHOP OF RIMINI
FOR THE 25th MEETING OF FRIENDSHIP AMONG PEOPLES**

*To my Venerable Brother
Bishop Mariano De Nicolò of Rimini*

1. I am pleased to send my greetings and good wishes to you, to the organizers and to all who will be speaking at the *Meeting for Friendship Among Peoples*.

The traditional event that enlivens and enriches the Italian summer with its content is being celebrated for the 25th time. This is a significant milestone that puts it in the context of the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of *Communion and Liberation*, an ecclesial movement born from the priestly zeal of Mons. Luigi Giussani: two important events that shed light on each other.

The theme chosen for the Meeting offers stimulating ideas for reflection on the thorniest issues that dramatically confront contemporary man. Indeed, they are illuminated by the knowledge that "*our progress does not consist in presuming we have arrived, but in constantly striving for our goal*".

2. Actually, everyone knows that "sense of power which modern technological progress begets in man" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 20). Thus, there is a particularly strong temptation to think that human work in itself justifies its proposed goals. Many regard and defend as acceptable *a priori* the results achieved in the various branches of science and technology. This leads to claiming that what is technologically possible is also in itself ethically good.

According to this opinion, precisely because progress in science and in technological means available to man are a constant incentive to move the boundary ever further ahead between what it is possible to "achieve" and what is not yet possible, such progress would end by moving forward indefinitely the boundary between the just and the unjust. In this perspective, progress

would become an absolute value in itself, indeed, the actual source of every value. Truth and justice would no longer be superior instances for judgment, criteria that people must abide by in directing the actions that fuel progress, but would become a product of their own research and of the manipulation of reality.

No one can fail to see the dramatic and distressing consequences of this pragmatism that conceives of truth and justice as malleable qualities that human beings themselves can shape. One relevant example among others is man's attempt to control the sources of life through experiments in human cloning. Here, we can see for ourselves the theme the Meeting refers to: the violence with which people seek to appropriate the true and the just, reducing them to values which can arbitrarily be disposed of without recognizing any kind of limit, apart from those fixed and continuously surpassed by their technological operability.

3. Christ taught another way: it is that of respect for human beings; the priority of every method of research must be to know the truth about human beings, in order to serve them and not to manipulate them according to a project sometimes arrogantly seen as better even than the plan of the Creator.

For Christians, the mystery of being is so profound that it is unfathomable to human inquiry. On the other hand, persons with the presumption of Prometheus, who set themselves up as arbiters of good and evil, make progress their absolute ideal and are subsequently crushed by it. The century just ended, having experienced the ideologies that have grievously marked our tragic history and the wars that have left deep scars, shows us all what the outcome of such presumption can be.

The theme of the Rimini Meeting is an invitation to look with wonder at the Creator, enraptured by the beauty and rationality of all that he has brought to life and keeps alive. Only this humility before the grandeur and mystery of creation can save men and women from the negative consequences of their own arrogance.

I hope with all my heart that the Meeting will help to foster this attitude of humility to the treasures that the Creator has lavished upon the universe as reflections of his wisdom, so that from contemplating them believers may ceaselessly draw new enlightenment and comfort in their daily confrontation with the questions that life raises.

To this end, I assure you of my remembrance in prayer and I impart a special Blessing to you all.

From Castel Gandolfo, 6 August 2004

JOHN PAUL II

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