



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE STAFF AND MEMBERS OF THE NATO DEFENSE COLLEGE*

Thursday, 8 February 1979

Dear friends, MY PREDECESSOR PAUL VI was happy to have repeated visits over the years from the faculty, staff and members of the NATO Defense College. And today, I wish to assure you all of my own personal and cordial welcome to the Vatican. It is a pleasure to greet you and your families for the first time, to experience the joy of the children's presence, and briefly to consider with you the role that you are able to play at the service of peace in the world. In my Message for this year's World Day of Peace, I endeavoured to draw attention to the close relationship between education and peace. Precisely because you are an institution of education, I am convinced that you have special opportunities to reflect on peace – special opportunities to study the prerequisites and conditions of peace, the components of peace the exigencies of peace. Living and studying in a climate of international solidarity, you are able to meditate on the principles of peace: to consolidate ideas and to reinforce attitudes that promote it. Yes, the condition of the edifice of peace depends on the firmness with which the principles of its foundation are embraced. And so I would hope that at the core of your activities there would be a reflection on the great principles related to peace, and a renewed dedication on your part to their application. In this regard, how necessary it is for all individuals and peoples to cultivate that mutual trust which is an obligation springing from the bonds that unite us as children of God! Sensitivity to the immense needs of humanity brings with it a spontaneous rejection of the arms race, which is so incompatible with the all out struggle against hunger, sickness, underdevelopment and illiteracy. Reflection on the sacredness of human life, on the exigencies of justice, and on the unacceptability of violence in its many forms – reflection on these themes is truly needed in order to ensure the basis of peace. In a word, the cause of world peace is effectively fostered when the dignity of the human person is upheld. The inviolable dignity of every individual and of all peoples in the full reality of their origin, existence and destiny is central to the issue of world peace. It is my prayer that you yourselves will think thoughts of peace, engender new attitudes of peace in the younger generation, and effectively and perseveringly promote the conditions that lead to peace. And may God give you peace in your hearts and in your homes – today and always.

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