



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO INDIA

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS  
IN THE "INDIRA GANDHI" STADIUM**

*Delhi (India)*

*Sunday, 2 February 1986*

*Dear Friends,*

1. I am pleased that my pilgrimage to India has brought me to Delhi, and once again to this Indira Gandhi Stadium. Here we are experiencing together, in a religious and cultural setting, the reality that is man in this your vast and fascinating land. You are representatives and leaders in various fields of human life and endeavour. To all of you I offer my greetings of friendship, respect and fraternal love.

I wish to thank all who have made this meeting possible, and I am especially pleased that so many young people are able to be here. I am very grateful to those of different religions who have welcomed me so cordially and have presented their deep reflections, together with their earnest hopes for India and for the world.

For all of us this experience is conducive to a deep reflection on this reality of man which we perceive and are immersed in. In India, without doubt, this reality offers us a spiritual vision of man. I believe that this spiritual vision is of supreme relevance for the people of India and for their future; it says much about their values, their hopes and aspirations and their human dignity. I believe that a spiritual vision of man is of immense importance for the whole of humanity. With an emphasis on spiritual values the world is capable of formulating a new attitude towards itself – new, but based to a great extent on ethical values preserved for centuries, many of them in this ancient land. These include a spirit of fraternal charity and dedicated service, forgiveness, sacrifice and renunciation, remorse and penance for moral failings and patience and forbearance.

2. With the passing of time, it becomes evident that it is necessary to return over and over again to the central issue of the world, which is man: man as a creature and child of God; man bearing within his heart and soul the image to fulfil his calling to live for ever.

The one who speaks to you today is convinced that man is the way that the Catholic Church must take in order to be faithful to herself. In my first Encyclical I stated: "Man is the full truth of his existence, of his personal being and also of his community and social being – in the sphere of his own family, in the sphere of society and very diverse contexts, in the sphere of his own nation or people... and in the sphere of the whole of mankind – this man is the primary route that the Church must travel in fulfilling her mission". And with equal conviction I would state that man is the primary route that all humanity must follow – but always man in the "full truth of his existence".

3. India has so much to offer to the world in the task of understanding man and the truth of his existence. And what she offers specifically is a noble spiritual vision of man – man, a pilgrim of the Absolute, travelling towards a goal, seeking the face of God. Did not Mahatma Gandhi put it this way: "What I want to achieve – what I have been striving and pining to achieve... is self-realization – to see God face to face. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal".

On the rectitude of this spiritual vision is built the defence of man in his daily life. With this spiritual vision of man we are equipped to face the concrete problems that affect man, torment his soul and afflict his body.

From this vision comes the incentive to undertake the struggle to remedy and improve man's condition, and to pursue relentlessly his integral human development. From it comes the strength to persevere in the cause, as well as the clarity of thought needed to find concrete solutions to man's problems. From a spiritual vision of man is derived the inspiration to seek help and to offer collaboration in promoting the true good of humanity at every level. Yes, from this spiritual vision comes an indomitable spirit to win for man – for each man – his rightful place in this world.

Despite all the powerful forces of poverty and oppression, of evil and sin in all their forms, the power of truth, will prevail – the truth about God, the truth about man. It will prevail because it is invincible. The power of truth is invincible! "Satyam èva jayatè – Truth alone triumphs", as the motto of India proclaims.

4. The full truth about man constitutes a whole programme for world-wide commitment and collaboration. My predecessor Paul VI returned over and over again to the concept of integral human development, because it is based on the truth about man. He proposed it as the only way to bring about man's true progress at any time, but especially at this juncture of history.

In particular Paul VI looked upon integral human development as a condition for arriving at that great and all pervasive good which is peace. Indeed, he stated that this development is "the new

name for peace" .

To pursue integral human development it is necessary to take a stand on what is greatest and most noble in man: to reflect on his nature, his life and his destiny. In a word, integral human development requires a spiritual vision of man.

If we are to further the advancement of man we must identify whatever obstructs and contradicts his total well-being and affects his life; we must identify whatever wounds, weakens or destroys life, whatever attacks human dignity and hinders man from attaining the truth or from living according to the truth.

The pursuit of integral human development invites the world to reflect on culture and to view it in its relationship to the final end of man. Culture is not only an expression of man's temporal life but an aid in reaching his eternal life.

India's mission in all of this is crucial, because of her intuition of the spiritual nature of man. Indeed India's greatest contribution to the world can be to offer it a spiritual vision of man. And the world does well to attend willingly to this ancient wisdom and in it to find enrichment for human living.

5. The attainment of integral human development for mankind makes demands on each individual. It requires a radical openness to others, and people are more readily open to each other when they understand their own spiritual nature and that of their neighbour.

The Second Vatican Council perceived in our world "the birth of a new humanism in which man is defined above all by his responsibility towards his brothers and sisters and towards history" . It is indeed evident that there is no place in this world for "man's inhumanity to man". Selfishness is a contradiction. By his nature man is called to open his heart, in love, to his neighbours, because he has been loved by God. In Christian tradition as expressed by Saint John's Letter we read: " Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another... If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us" .

The building of a new world requires something deeply personal from each human being. The renewal of the world in all its social relations begins in the heart of every individual. It calls for a change of heart and for repentance. It calls for a purification of heart and a real turning to God. And what is deeply personal is supremely social, because "man is defined above all in his responsibilities to his brothers and sisters...". Christians cherish the fact that, in teaching his followers how to pray, Jesus told them to approach God by calling him "Our Father " .

While speaking of my own convictions, I know that many of them are in accord with what is expressed in the ancient wisdom of this land. And in this wisdom we find today an ever old and ever new basis for fraternal solidarity in the cause of man and therefore ultimately in the service of

God.

The spiritual vision of man that India shares with the world is the vision of man seeking the face of God. The very words used by Mahatma Gandhi about his own spiritual quest echo the words quoted by Saint Paul when he explained that God is not far from each of us: " In him we live and move and have our being " .

6. Religion directs our lives totally to God, and at the same time our lives must be totally permeated by our relationship to God – to the point that our religion becomes our life. Religion is concerned with humanity and everything that belongs to humanity, and at the same time it directs to God all that is human within us. I would repeat what I wrote at the beginning of my Pontificate: "Inspired by eschatological faith, the Church considers an essential, unbreakably united element of her mission this solicitude for man, for his humanity, for the future of men on earth and therefore also for the course set for the whole of development and progress" . As religion works to promote the reign of God in this world, it tries to help the whole of society to promote man's transcendent destiny. At the same time it teaches its members a deep personal concern for neighbour and civic responsibility for the community. The Apostle John issued a challenge to the early Christian community which remains valid for all religious people everywhere: " I ask you, how can God's love survive in a man who has enough of this world's goods yet closes his heart to his brother when he sees him in need?" .

7. In the world today, there is a need for all religions to collaborate in the cause of humanity, and to do this from the viewpoint of the spiritual nature of man. Today, as Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsees and Christians, we gather in fraternal love to assert this by our very presence. As we proclaim the truth about man, we insist that man's search for temporal and social well-being and full human dignity corresponds to the deep longings of his spiritual nature. To work for the attainment and preservation of all human rights, including the basic right to worship God according to the dictates of an upright conscience and to profess that faith externally, must become ever more a subject of interreligious collaboration at all levels. This interreligious collaboration must also be concerned with the struggle to eliminate hunger, poverty, ignorance, persecution, discrimination and every form of enslavement of the human spirit. Religion is the mainspring of society's commitment to justice, and interreligious collaboration must reaffirm this in practice.

8. All efforts in the cause of man are linked to a particular vision of man, and all effective and complete efforts require a spiritual vision of man. With Paul VI I repeat the conviction that " there is no true humanism but that which is open to the Absolute and is conscious of a vocation which gives human life its true meaning... Man can only realise himself by reaching beyond himself" .

The late President of India, Dr Radhakrishnan, was right when he said: " Only a moral and spiritual revolution in the name of human dignity can place man above the idols of economic production

technological organisation, racial discrimination and national egotism" . And again "The new world of peace, freedom and safety for all can be achieved only by those who are moved by great spiritual ideals" .

The wisdom of India will contribute incalculably to the world by its witness to the fact that increased possession is not the ultimate goal of life. The true liberation of man will be brought about, as also the elimination of all that militates against human dignity, only when the spiritual vision of man is held in honour and pursued. Only within this framework can the world adequately face the many problems of justice, peace and integral human development that call for urgent solutions. And within this framework of the truth of man, the holiness of God will be made manifest by the rectitude and uprightness of human relations in the social, political, cultural and economic spheres of life.

9. This is the humanism that unites us today and invites us to fraternal collaboration. This is the humanism that we offer to all the young people present here today and to all the young people of the world. This is the humanism to which India can make an imperishable contribution. What is at stake is the well-being of all human society – the building up of an earthly city that will already prefigure the eternal one and contain in initial form the elements that will for ever be part of man's eternal destiny.

The Prophet Isaiah offers us his vision of this reality:

"I will appoint peace your governor,  
and justice your ruler.  
No longer shall violence be heard of in your land,  
or plunder and ruin within your boundaries.  
You shall call your walls ' Salvation'  
and your gates 'Praise'.  
No longer shall the sun  
be your light by day,  
Nor the brightness of the moon shine upon you at night;  
The Lord shall be your light forever,  
your God shall be your glory" .

However we describe our spiritual vision of man, we know that man is central to God's plan. And it is for man that we are all called to work – to labour and toil for his betterment, for his advancement, for his integral human development. A creature and child of God, man is, today and always, the path of humanity – man in the full truth of his existence!

