



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE STAFF MEMBERS OF THE DIALOGUE SUB-UNIT
OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**

Friday, 21 June 1991

Dear Friends,

I am very pleased to welcome the staff members of the *Dialogue Sub-Unit of the World Council of Churches* at the conclusion of your annual joint meeting with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. Together you have reflected on the proceedings of the Seventh Plenary Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Canberra earlier this year, and on the problems created by the Gulf War for the peoples of the Middle East and elsewhere. I am confident that these discussions will serve to further the mutual respect and collaboration that are required of all believers in safeguarding religious values, promoting the integral development of the human person and building a more just and fraternal society for the good of the entire human family.

Through dialogue the Catholic Church has come to recognize more and more that other religions can offer a positive challenge for her own life and mission: "they stimulate her both to discover and acknowledge the signs of Christ's presence and of the working of the Spirit, as well as to examine more deeply her own identity and to bear witness to the fullness of Revelation which she has received for all" (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 56). Through dialogue she "seeks to uncover the 'seeds of the Word', a 'ray of that truth which enlightens all men'" (*Ibid*).

Dialogue with traditional religions joins us in holy awe before the divine mystery which guides human destiny.

It unites us in an awareness of nature as the Creator's gift to mankind. Dialogue with the great religious traditions of Asia recalls for us the universal value of self-discipline, silence and contemplation in developing the human person and in opening hearts to God and neighbour.

Dialogue among Christians, Muslims and Jews reminds us of a common heritage of belief in the One God who created us, who shows us his will, and who calls us to be happy with him in eternity.

It is especially important in the aftermath of the Gulf War that those belonging to the three religions which have their historical roots in the Middle East should strive to overcome misunderstandings through genuine dialogue in an atmosphere of religious freedom based on mutual respect. I am fully convinced that this is essential for a just and lasting peace in the whole region, which for so long has been troubled by violence and discord. Only through interreligious dialogue can the powerful role of religious faith be placed at the service of peace through the elimination of prejudice and intolerance, to the glory of God in whose oneness we all believe.

Dear friends, as you know at first hand, dialogue demands docility to the Spirit and open-mindedness, as well as humility, frankness and a reverence for truth. It is my fervent prayer that these gifts of heart and mind will be yours in abundance as you work to foster new and ever more fruitful paths of religious understanding and cooperation. Upon all of you and your loved ones I cordially invoke the divine blessings of grace and peace.

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