



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY
OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

MEETING WITH THE PERSONNEL OF THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II*

United Nations Headquarters (New York)

Thursday, 5 October 1995

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It gives me great pleasure to greet you, the staff members of the United Nations Organization, and to acknowledge the important contribution which you make to this worldwide Organization in its efforts to promote harmony and solidarity among peoples. Your service here is not only a tribute to yourselves, but also a sign that the countries from which you come are committed to working for justice and peace in the world.

2. Unfortunately, as all of us are painfully aware, our modern world is still witnessing terrible armed conflicts and political and economic tensions which give rise to unspeakable offenses against human life and freedom. Against that background, how can we fail to remember, and commend to God's loving mercy, all those who have given their lives in the service of the United Nations and its ideals, especially those who have fallen in peace-keeping and humanitarian missions. Their sacrifice is an integral part of United Nations history.

In the face of continuing tragedy and evil, however, we do not lose hope with regard to the future. For we witness the sincere efforts of nations striving to work together, actively pursuing policies of partnership and joint responsibility in addressing problems both old and new.

In this climate of international cooperation, your contribution as staff members of the United Nations Organization is indispensable. You bring a wealth of insights and experiences from your own countries and peoples; you exhibit a faithfulness and loyalty to your own traditions and cultures, while being able at the same time to see beyond them; you show a special concern for the entire human family. I would assure you that in the work of promoting justice, building peace and ensuring that human dignity and human rights are respected throughout the world you have the full and complete support of the Catholic Church.

3. The Church herself does not give technical advice, nor does she promote any specific political or economic program. Rather, she speaks to the human heart and magnifies the voice of human conscience. She seeks to educate and ennoble people so that they accept responsibility for themselves and for others. In the context of the community of nations, the Church's message is simple yet absolutely crucial for the survival of humanity and the world: the human person must be the true focus of all social, political and economic activity.

This truth, when effectively put into practice, will point the way to healing the divisions between rich and poor, to overcoming the inequality between the strong and the weak, to reconciling man with himself and with God. For men and women are made in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:27). So people may never be regarded as mere objects, nor may they be sacrificed for political, economic or social gain. We must never allow them to be manipulated or enslaved by ideologies or technology. Their God-given dignity and worth as human beings forbid this.

4. Dear friends, this truth which is so critical for national and international policy-making is no less important in the context of your daily work here at the United Nations Headquarters. For you, it means being resolutely committed to honesty and personal integrity in your work and professional relationships. It means respecting the religious and cultural traditions of others, and even protecting and promoting them when necessary. It means applying to yourselves the same standards of conduct and courtesy which you expect from others.

And not only this: it also means having a very special concern for family life, your own and that of others. The struggles involved in raising a family, caring for children and making sure that they receive a proper education, are personal concerns to be sure, but they can also indicate the love and attention with which you serve your peoples, your nations, and the world.

5. At the beginning of my Pontificate, some seventeen years ago, I wrote that it was difficult to say what mark the year 2000 would leave on the face of human history, to know what it would bring to each people, nation, country and continent (cf. Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, 1). It is no easier to foretell these things today; but I do know that your dedicated work here at the United Nations is a promising sign that the new millennium will see a reflowering of true humanity in compassion, openness and solidarity between peoples and nations.

My prayers are with you and your families. May Almighty God bless you always and strengthen you with his grace and peace, that you may continue to serve him in the service you give to the whole human family!

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XVIII, 2 p. 745-747.*

L'Osservatore Romano 11.10.1995 p. VII.

L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n. 41 p.12.

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