



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE OF HUMANISTS

Friday, 9 February 2001

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen!

1. I am pleased to meet you and I extend my cordial greetings to each of you. By your presence in Rome you wish to bear witness to the sufferings, joys and hopes of the people of Bosnia and Hercegovina, especially to the plight of the refugees and exiles, which has yet to be satisfactorily resolved in the light of the Washington and Dayton Accords. Your visit offers me the occasion once again to assure those dear people of my spiritual closeness.

We are living at a time when the consequences of the globalization phenomenon can be seen with increasing clarity. The consequences are not all negative, for the phenomenon implies a growing closeness and greater familiarity among people from every part of the world, thus opening the way to possible agreements for a more fraternal sharing of resources. Very often, however, this does not occur. Problems thus arise that challenge the consciences of all, inviting them to take a stand. To respond to "human" problems of this kind, you decided to create your "International League". You wish to devote your energies to hastening the arrival of a more just and human world.

2. Today as yesterday, the Church is close to those who put themselves in the service of the cause of man. The Second Vatican Council recalls, in this regard, that "nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in the hearts" of Christ's disciples (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 1).

The Church's attention to man forms an integral part of her mission. The human being is the way for the Church, precisely because the salvation achieved by Jesus Christ, the Son of God who also wished to be the Son of man, concerns every person as a whole. The social action of the Ecclesial Community unfolds in many ways and embraces numerous programmes. Various structures have arisen in the Church to meet humanity's needs. No less extensive is her

cooperation with all people of good will who have the common good at heart. It is a cooperation that includes vast fields of activity and concerns respect for man, for his dignity and for his inalienable rights, his material, moral and spiritual development, and support for his quality of life.

3. It is with this spirit that she acts in various parts of the world, as in Bosnia and Hercegovina, a land particularly dear to me. I am well aware of the social, political and economic problems that the local people are facing in this period. In the years of the recent armed conflict, the Holy See did not fail to make its peacemaking presence felt. Even now it continues to be involved in various initiatives on behalf of justice and peace.

The most difficult period for Bosnia and Hercegovina has passed, but the people's suffering continues, especially in the plight of refugees and exiles. Tens of thousands of people from the Banja Luka region, Bosanska Posavina and other parts of the country are still waiting to return to their homes. We must not forget this tragedy. On the contrary, we must promote effective solidarity at the local and international levels. It is first necessary to correct the existing injustices by listening to the legitimate expectations of those who are directly involved and who ask to have their inalienable rights respected. This is the basis for building a future of hope in the multiethnic, multicultural and multireligious society that characterizes Bosnia and Hercegovina.

4. I pray to God that the efforts of all will soon put an end to the suffering caused by the recent armed conflict in Bosnia and Hercegovina, and that everyone will be offered equal opportunities and have their full and unconditional freedom of religion guaranteed. Support and understanding are needed: support for overcoming the current social, political and economic problems; understanding for finding better solutions to the legitimate expectations of the three peoples that make up the country.

Dear ladies and gentlemen, I am sure that you will actively cooperate in this important work of building a future of peace. I urge you, along with the civil and religious authorities, to be generously involved in promoting the welfare of Bosnia and Hercegovina's people.

I entrust your intentions to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who knows the sufferings, joys and hopes of these people, and I affectionately give you and all your loved ones my Apostolic Blessing.