



The Holy See

DAY OF PRAYER
FOR PEACE IN THE WORLD

HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II
WORDS OF INTRODUCTION

Assisi, 24 January 2002

1. I greet you all with great joy and I extend a cordial welcome to all present. Thank you for accepting my invitation to take part in this gathering of prayer for peace in Assisi. It brings to mind the meeting here in 1986, and is in a sense an important continuation of that event. It shares the same goal: to pray for peace, which is above all a gift to be implored from God with fervent and trusting insistence. In times of greater anxiety about the fate of the world, we sense more clearly than ever the duty to commit ourselves personally to the defence and promotion of the fundamental good which is peace.

2. I extend a special greeting to the Ecumenical Patriarch, His Holiness Bartholomeos I, and those who have accompanied him; to the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, His Beatitude Ignatius IV; to the Catholicos Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV; to the Archbishop of Tirana, Durres and All Albania, His Beatitude Anastas; to the Delegates of the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Jerusalem, Moscow, Serbia, Rumania; of the Orthodox Churches of Bulgaria, Cyprus and Poland; to the Delegates of the Ancient Churches of the East: the Syro-Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, the Orthodox Church of Ethiopia, the Syro-Malankar Orthodox Church. I greet the Representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Archbishop George Carey, the many Representatives of the Churches and Ecclesial Communities, Christian Federations and Alliances of the West; the Secretary General of the Ecumenical Council of Churches; the distinguished Representatives of world Judaism who have joined us for this special day of prayer for peace.

3. I also wish to greet most cordially the followers of the various religions: the Representatives of

Islam who have come from Albania, Saudi Arabia, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Egypt, Jerusalem, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Senegal, the United States of America, Sudan and Turkey; the Buddhist Representatives, from Taiwan and Great Britain; the Hindu Representatives from India; the Representatives of African Traditional Religion who have come from Ghana and Benin; and also the Japanese Delegates representing various religions and movements; the Sikh Representatives from India, Singapore and Great Britain; and the Confucian, Zoroastrian and Jain Delegates. I cannot mention everyone by name, but I do wish my welcome to include all of you, dearly cherished Guests, whom I thank once again for having agreed to take part in this important Day.

4. I am grateful too to the Cardinals and Bishops here present; in particular to Cardinal Edward Egan, Archbishop of New York, the city so terribly affected by the tragic events of September 11. I greet the Representatives of the Episcopate of those countries where the need for peace is especially felt. A special thought goes to Cardinal Lorenzo Antonetti, Pontifical Delegate for the Patriarchal Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi, and to the beloved Conventual Franciscans who, as always, are offering a generous welcome and warm hospitality.

With deference I greet the Prime Minister of Italy, the Honourable Silvio Berlusconi, the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, and the other public Authorities who honour us with their presence. I greet the Police forces and all those who are doing everything possible to ensure the success of this day.

Finally, my greeting goes to you, dear Brothers and Sisters here present, and especially to you, dear young people who have kept vigil through the night. God grant that today's gathering may produce those fruits of peace for the whole world which we all so ardently desire.