



The Holy See

SPEECH OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT "NOVA SPES"

Hall of Popes

Saturday, 10 November 1979

Venerable Brother,

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

I AM PARTICULARLY pleased to have this meeting today with you who are the worthy members of the international movement "Nova Spes", which has for its specific purpose the promotion of human values and human advancement. You are certainly well aware that I have your aims very much at heart, as I think I amply showed in the Encyclical Letter [Redemptor Hominis](#).

The very fitting title which you have given to the "Colloquium Romanum" that you are now holding is a question: "Man: who is he really?". This is undoubtedly a fundamental theme, and the fact that it is put in the form of a question enables one to discern, while respecting it, the almost inexhaustible depth of the subject. In fact, there is great truth in the saying of the ancient Greek philosopher, according to whom, human beings are "a fairly vast theatre to one another"^[1].

But what he was applying only to relationships between friends we Christians willingly admit to be true of human nature in general, thus avoiding any trivializing or reduction to just one dimension, precisely because in its ungraspable horizon we recognize the reflection of the infinity of God and his unfathomable mystery.

The innate dignity of man as the "image" of God^[2] really consists in the fact that, according to Ecclesiasticus, God "put his own light in their hearts"^[3], while later on the Son of Man revealed in human fashion the very God whom no one has ever seen^[4], and "who is not ashamed to call them brethren"^[5].

For this reason the question about man involves the corresponding question about God; the greatness or the smallness of every man, in fact, in the last analysis depends upon the identity of his God of his idol. Between the two poles there is an interdependence such that we too, addressing the man of today, are constrained to repeat the words of the ancient Christian apologist: "Show me your man and I will show you my God"[6].

Dear friends, I know that your commitment is to this clearest line of honest discussion of the problem, of loving resolve and of selfless openness. For this reason, I wish you all possible success in your efforts to ensure genuine love for man, a love stemming from a deeply rooted attitude of love for the glory of God.

With my prayers I confirm these hopes, and I assure you of my cordial good wishes and of my profound esteem.

[1] Epicurus memoratus in Seneca *Ad Luc.* 7, 11.

[2] Cfr. *Gen.* 1, 27.

[3] *Sir.* 17, 7.

[4] Cfr. *Io.* 1, 18.

[5] *Hebr.* 2, 11.

[6] Theophili Antiocheni *Ad Aut.* 1, 2.