



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE NATO DEFENCE COLLEGE*

Monday, 1 February 1982

Dear friends,

It is a pleasure to welcome you once again to the Vatican, members of the NATO Defence College and your families. I appreciate the opportunity of greeting you, and of addressing to you some brief considerations. As in the past, so also this year, I feel compelled to speak to you about peace, since, in virtue of the opportunities afforded to you for study and dialogue, you have a particular contribution to make to the great work of peace.

The events of the past several months have made the world increasingly aware of the complex obstacles which continue to impede sincere efforts for creating justice and harmony in today's society. It is true that our world is racked with division and tension, with oppression and bloodshed – horrifying realities which are so deep-rooted and extensive that some of our brothers and sisters despair of peace ever being achieved. They have simply lost hope. But we cannot yield to fatalism and despair. Indeed we must respond to the situation with constant hope and untiring effort.

Peace is possible. It can be achieved. We who are believers are convinced of this truth because we know in faith that God is the foundation of peace. God wills to give his peace to the world. He wills to bring about peace in every nation, among all peoples and in every human heart.

By divine design, however, God creates peace not independently of man but continually and precisely in cooperation with man. Peace is a gift of God entrusted to us. As I stated in my message for the recent World Day of Peace, “while peace is a gift, man is never dispensed from responsibility for seeking it and endeavouring to establish it by individual and community effort, throughout history. God's gift of peace is therefore also at all times a human conquest and achievement, since it is offered to us in order that we may accept it freely and put it progressively into operation by our creative will”. Since peace is not only a gift of God, but also a human conquest and achievement, it is a goal for which believers and non-believers alike – in fact all

people of good will – can join hands and collaborate for the betterment of the entire world.

As we meet today, I am happily reminded of the recent liberation from captivity of General James Dozier. His liberation was a moment of great joy for so many people who had hoped and prayed for his release. It has given us new reason to believe that the scourge of terrorism can be brought to an end. And it has renewed our conviction that non-violent means are the one way to achieve long-lasting political and social reforms in any country.

As members of the NATO Defence College, may your activities always be motivated by a deep confidence in the possibility of peace and by a profound respect for the dignity of every human person. I pray that Almighty God will assist you in your every effort to build a future marked by harmony, justice and peace. God bless you and your families.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. V,1 pp. 278-279.*

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