



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
HIS EXCELLENCY, MISTER RONALD REAGAN***

Monday, 7 June 1982

Mr President,

1. I am particularly pleased to welcome you today to the Vatican. Although we have already had many contacts, it is the first time that we have met personally.

In you, the President of the United States of America, I greet all the people of your great land. I still remember vividly the warm welcome that I was given by millions of your fellow-citizens less than three years ago. On that occasion I was once more able to witness firsthand the vitality of your nation. I was able to see again how *the moral and spiritual values transmitted by your Founding Fathers* find their dynamic expression in the life of modern America.

The American people are indeed proud of their right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. They are proud of civil and social progress in American society, as well as the extraordinary advances in science and technology. As I speak to you today it is my hope that the entire structure of American life will rest ever more securely on the strong foundation of moral and spiritual values. Without the fostering and defense of these values, all human advancement is stunted and the very dignity of the human person is endangered.

2. Throughout the course of their history, and especially in difficult times, the American people have repeatedly risen to challenges presented to them. They have given many proofs of unselfishness, generosity, concern for others - concern for the poor, the needy, the oppressed; they have shown confidence in that great ideal of being a united people, with a mission of service to perform. At this present moment in the history of the world, the United States is called, above all, to fulfil *its mission in the service of world peace*. The very condition of the world today calls for

a farsighted policy that will favour those indispensable conditions of justice and freedom, of truth and love that are the foundations of lasting peace.

3. Mr. President, my own *greatest preoccupation is for the peace of the world* - peace in our day. In many parts of the world there are centers of acute tension. This acute tension is manifested above all in the crisis in the South Atlantic, in the war between Iran and Iraq, and, now, in the grave crisis provoked by the new events in Lebanon. This grave crisis in Lebanon likewise merits the attention of the world because of the danger it contains of further provocation in the Middle East, with immense consequences for world peace.

There are fortunately many factors in society that today positively contribute to peace. These positive factors include an increasing realization of the interdependence of all peoples, a growing solidarity with those in need, and a greater conviction of the absurdity of war as a means of resolving controversies between nations. During my recent visit to Britain I stated in particular that “the scale and horror of *modern warfare* - whether nuclear or not - makes it *totally unacceptable as a means of settling differences* between nations” (IOANNIS PAULI PP. II *Allocutio in urbe «Coventry» habita, 2, die 30 maii 1982*: vide *supra*, p. 1976). And for those who profess the Christian faith I offered as motivation the fact that “when you are in contact with the Prince of Peace, you understand how totally opposed to his message are . . . hatred and war” (EIUSDEM *Allocutio ad iuvenes in urbe «Cardiff» habita, 5, die 2 iun. 1982*: vide *supra*, p. 2100).

4. The duty of peace falls especially upon the leaders of the world. It is up to the representatives of governments and peoples to work *to free humanity not only from wars and conflicts but from the fear that is generated by ever more sophisticated and deadly weapons*. Peace is not only the absence of war; it also involves reciprocal trust between nations - a trust that is manifested and proved through constructive negotiations that aim at ending the arms race, and at liberating immense resources that can be used to alleviate misery and feed millions of hungry human beings.

5. *All effective peacemaking requires farsightedness*; farsightedness is a quality needed in all peacemakers. Your own great nation is called to exercise this farsightedness, as are all the nations of the world. This quality enables leaders to commit themselves to those concrete programs which are essential to world peace - programs of justice and development, efforts to defend and protect human life, as well as initiatives that favor human rights. On the contrary, anything that wounds, weakens or dishonors human dignity in any aspect, imperils the cause of the human person and, at the same time, the peace of the world.

6. The relations between nations are greatly affected by the development issue, which preserves its full relevance in this day of ours. Success in resolving questions in the *North-South dialogue* will continue to be the gauge of peaceful relations between various political communities and continue to influence the peace of the world in the years ahead. Economic and social

advancement, linked to financial collaboration between peoples, remains an apt goal for the renewed efforts of the statesmen of the world.

7. A truly *universal concept of the common good* of the human family is an incomparable instrument in building the edifice of world peace. It is my own conviction that a united and concerned America can contribute immensely to the cause of world peace through the efforts of her leaders and the commitment of all her citizens. Dedicated to the high ideals of her traditions, America is in a splendid position to help all humanity enjoy what she herself is intent on possessing. With faith in God and belief in universal human solidarity, may America step forward at his crucial moment in history to consolidate her rightful place at the service of world peace.

In this sense, Mr. President, I repeat today those words that I spoke when I left the United States in 1979: "My final prayer is this: that God will bless America, so that she may increasingly become - and truly be - and long remain - «One Nation *under God*, indivisible. With liberty and justice for all»".

*AAS 74 (1982) p.851-853.

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