



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS**

Friday, 6 July 1984

Dear Friends,

Mr President

and members of the Executive Committee

of the International Council of Christians and Jews,

1. I thank you, Mr President, for the kind words of greeting with which you have now presented to me the aims, the tasks and the concerns of the International Council of Christians and Jews. And I thank you also, members of the Executive Committee, for your kindness in visiting the Pope on the occasion of your International Colloquium, to be held at Vallombrosa next week. Welcome to this house where the activities of those who promote the dialogue between Christians and Jews and are personally engaged in it are closely followed and warmly encouraged. Indeed, it is only through such a meeting of minds and hearts, reaching out to our respective faith communities, and also perhaps to other faith communities, as you try to do with Islam, that both Jews and Christians are able to profit from their "great common spiritual patrimony" (*Nostra Aetate*, 4) and to make it fruitful for their own good and the good of the world.

2. Yes, a "great common spiritual patrimony" which should be, in the first place, brought to the knowledge of all Christians and all Jews and which embraces not only one or the other isolated element but a solid, fruitful, rich common religious inheritance: in monotheism; in faith in a God who as a loving father takes care of humankind and chose Abraham and the prophets and sent Jesus into the world; in a common basic liturgical pattern and in a common consciousness of our commitment, grounded in faith, to all men and women in need, who are our "neighbours" (Cf. *Lev.* 19, 18a; *Marc.* 12, 31).

This is why you are so much concerned with religious education on both sides, that the images which each of us projects of the other should be really free of stereotypes and prejudices, that they should respect the other's identity and should in fact prepare the people for the meetings of minds and hearts just mentioned. The proper teaching of history is also a concern of yours. Such a concern is very understandable, given the sad and entangled common history of Jews and

Christians - a history which is not always taught or transmitted correctly.

3. There is again the danger of an always active and sometimes even resurgent tendency to discriminate between people and human groups, enhancing some and despising others. A tendency which does not hesitate at times to use violent methods.

To single out and denounce such facts and stand together against them is a noble act and a proof of our mutual brotherly commitment. But it is necessary to go to the roots of such evil, by education, especially education for dialogue. This however would not be enough if it were not coupled with a deep change in our heart, a real spiritual conversion. This also means constantly reaffirming common religious values and working towards a personal religious commitment in the love of God, our Father, and in the love of all men and women (*Deut.* 6, 5; *Lev.* 19, 19; *Marc.* 12, 28-34). The golden rule, we are well aware, is common to Jews and Christians alike.

In this context is to be seen your important work with youth. By bringing together young Christians and Jews, and enabling them to live, talk, sing and pray together, you greatly contribute towards the creation of a new generation of men and women, mutually concerned for one another and for all, prepared to serve others in need, whatever their religious profession, ethnic origin or colour.

World peace is built in this modest, apparently insignificant and limited, but, in the end, very efficient way. And we are all concerned for peace everywhere, among and within nations, particularly in the Middle East.

4. Common study of our religious sources is again one of the items on your agenda. I encourage you to put to good use the important recommendation made by the Second Vatican Council in its Declaration "*Nostra Aetate*", 4, about "biblical and theological studies" which are the source of "mutual understanding and respect". In fact such studies, made in common, and altogether different from the ancient "disputations", tend to the true knowledge of each religion, and also to the joyful discovery of the "common patrimony" I spoke of at the beginning, always in the careful observance of each other's dignity.

May the Lord bless all your endeavours and repay you with the blessedness which Jesus proclaimed, in the tradition of the Old Testament, for those who work for peace (*Matth.* 5, 9; *Ps.* 37 (36), 37).

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