



The Holy See

VISITA PASTORALE NEI PAESI BASSI

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
AI RAPPRESENTANTI DELLE ISTITUZIONI ED
ORGANISMI DELLA COMUNITÀ EUROPEA****

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Mr President of the Court of Justice of the European Communities,
Distinguished Representatives of the institutions of the Community.

1. On behalf of the representatives of the institutions and administrative bodies of the European Community which have their headquarters in Luxembourg, Lord Mackenzie Stuart has expressed a welcome for which I am particularly grateful. Greeting you, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to share with you my great esteem for the institutions with which you collaborate. Performing the duties entrusted to you, you contribute daily to the great design from which the European Communities had their origins: that of developing among the nations of this continent the solidarity which was so cruelly disrupted when Europe was engulfed by two world wars. Your founders had the courage to begin the reconstruction of a unity shattered in the course of the last few centuries, and to lay the foundations for a community.

Within a few days I will also have occasion to visit the seat of the Council of Ministers and of the Commission of the European Communities in the course of my pastoral visit to Belgium. Finding myself among you today in the first papal visit to the Community Institutions, I would like to address themes which seem to me tied to the very nature of your mission. It is certainly not my intention to enter the field pertaining to the authority established here, nor the field of your specific competence. I come here as Pastor of the Catholic Church, which for two thousand years has had a particular place in European history and culture; that is, in the life of men. And I come here as a witness to man, man enlightened by faith in God regarding the meaning of his life.

2. It is noteworthy that some nations - each with a prestigious past - have been able, especially as regards their economy, to entrust a part of their powers to community, institutions and, overcoming real difficulties, to arrive at the agreements necessary for the good functioning of those institutions.

These assemblies are founded upon treaties whose application is carried out by common consent. The convergent action of this collection of States is based upon the primacy of law. The presence of a Court of Justice witnesses to the fact that the European Communities become a fundamental centre of law.

Before the temptations of power, before unfortunately inevitable conflicts of interest, it pertains to law to express and defend the equal dignity of nations and of persons. Is not the ability to protect its own members from every form of violence the first merit of a civilization founded upon law? Is it not the responsibility of law to consolidate peace through an equitable regulation of the relations among men, among men and their institutions? It is good to note that you contribute to the primacy of community solidarity over particular interests, even while offering the citizens of the various States a possibility of recourse. Without a doubt marked difficulties exist, but up to the present your task has tended to prevent the so called "institutional mechanisms" from doing damage to persons or impeding their legitimate aspirations. And the obligation of every jurisprudence includes especially the protection of groups and individuals that are disadvantaged due to their poverty, their health, their lack of formation, their situation as displaced persons, to mention only some of the wounds inflicted upon many of society's components.

The Community finds itself in a unique position in order to respond to these fundamental needs. You bring together nations which in the course of their history have established independent juridical traditions as their autonomy was slowly affirmed and as the relative homogeneity of the ancient and medieval civilizations was eliminated. Today you are called to bring different legislations closer together once again, to bring about a meeting of the great traditions which inspire them. Creating an autonomous European jurisprudence, it seems to me that you enjoy the good fortune of going beyond the mere juxtaposition of laws and pragmatic compromises, in the course of a process which is only beginning. Bit by bit your work will lead you to enrich the European complex thanks to the specific contributions of the various parts. As far as law is concerned, I hope that you will be able to realize a particularly beneficent form of progress in civilization, of which Europe has already gone through many stages in the course of its history

In our age a perfecting of law amplified to the dimension of a vast community, appears all the more necessary inasmuch as the society served by it is modified as a result of multiple and often contradictory influences. Men, whose fundamental aspirations law is called to promote, tend to disperse themselves as they seek diverse objectives, so much so that it is not easy to discern what is essential. The exaggeration of certain desires, magnified by the mass media; the fears experienced before all the threats of violence and instability which weigh upon the world; the ambiguous seductions exerted by the unheard-of possibilities of the life sciences: all these things expose modern man to the risk of no longer being able to mark out his path with clarity, allowing himself to be gripped by the dizziness of doubt, and finally to lose sight of the foundations of a sound ethic. The obligation which falls upon those who must express the rules of social life is thus grave. They need great intellectual integrity and great courage in order to exercise an arduous but

indispensable discernment. On its part the Church loses no opportunity to defend the primary values of respect for life in all of its stages, the inalienable goods of the institution of the family, the exercise of fundamental human rights, freedom of Conscience and religious observance, the development of the person in free communion with his brothers. I have confidence that you are also inspired by this intention. And I express the ardent hope that Europe might be able to react to everything that could weaken the benefits of a just ethic, so as to put in evidence the truth about man. And how can one fail to wish that, thanks to broadened cultural exchanges, all the European nations might be able to promote the values which they hold in common?

3. Ladies and gentlemen, the reflections which I am proposing regarding law and justice at the centre of society find a natural extension in the objectives pursued by the European Communities on the level of economic activity; many organizations located in this city contribute to it directly.

The present-day conditions of economic life, which abruptly changes and goes through crises, make its growth difficult and its equilibrium precarious. There is the tendency to defend what is most urgent. The technical requirements of a delicate co-ordination run the risk of leaving the purposes which motivate production and exchange somewhat in the background. It seems to me more necessary that those who witness to the whole truth about man do not stay on the sidelines. They must reaffirm a basic principle: the totality of available resources and work have the sole aim of procuring for all men the means to satisfy their life with respect for their dignity.

The concept of justice should be given its full extension. Justice is a fundamental requirement of every human group; it assumes new dimensions in a vast complex of associated nations. I know that the problems you seek to resolve are numerous. One finds oneself confronting many inequalities. In Europe the various regions find themselves at such different stages of development that their inhabitants are far from enjoying comparable levels of life. The evolution of technologies and exchanges throughout the world is such that entire sectors of activity enter into recession, without sufficient initiatives to compensate for this. The principal price which men pay is unemployment; and we know what misfortune it brings, particularly for the young. We cannot repeat often enough that it is everyone's responsibility not to resign themselves to such a situation; everyone must act according to his own competence. All the causes must be clearly examined; the solutions must be decided upon and put into effect, accepting the fact that they involve the renunciation of certain advantages on the part of some so that others may find the employment to which they have a right. An essential obligation concerns the young: society must be organized in such a manner that they receive the formation indispensable to their insertion into an active life and to their personal efforts towards building the future. I expressed myself more fully regarding these questions in my encyclical on work (*Laborem Exercens*, cf. n. 18) and in the discourse I gave during my visit to the International Labour Organization (Geneva, 15 June 1982, cf. n. 11-12). I would like to mention yet another truly human obligation, that of allowing the most fragile and defenseless persons among us to find a place in the community, thanks to an equitable division of resources fraternally accepted.

4. The economic power wielded by Europe makes it one of the favoured regions of the world, in spite of the real problems which it experiences. This situation creates a special responsibility for Europe in North-South relations, where human justice is necessary as well. While seeking for herself the ways to an internal solidarity, discarding prevalent temptations, she has a duty to extend this solidarity, in the same spirit and to the greatest extent possible, to the countries deprived of the same means of development. I know that this is one of your concerns and that many efforts have borne fruit as in the context of the successive conventions of Lomé. Nonetheless, we must incessantly ask ourselves whether everything which is just and realizable has been done concerning an important fraction of humanity, especially in Africa, where starvation is devastating, where the land is becoming impoverished, where the States are stalled by their foreign debts and have very little capacity for productive investments.

The drama of poverty demands that all energies be mobilized. A positive element that it is good to emphasize is the collaboration of Community Institutions with non governmental organizations working for development - many of which are of Christian inspiration - which are there on the scene and closely collaborating with the local authorities; often they are enabled to adapt the aid to its recipients, to sustain the agricultural efforts in order to improve crop production, to make cooperation a truly human exchange.

Will you permit me to recall here an oft-expressed concern which has exemplary value? I want to mention that there are many who oppose the contrast between the misery of populations deprived of nourishment and the accumulation of food surpluses in Europe. It is true that substantial shipments are made; on the other hand, the practical conditions are arduous and the problem cannot be resolved by a mere arithmetical operation. But in the face of such urgency couldn't more be done? Is there the will to do everything possible that the fruits of the earth might be consigned to those who have absolute need of them, at a time when so many other exchanges of wealth are being made? To work towards overcoming obvious inequality means to take the first concrete steps along the path of true solidarity among men who all have the right to live, and it is an authentic work of peace.

5. Ladies and gentlemen, before taking leave of you I would like to cordially greet the honourable members of the European Parliament who have participated in this meeting. I hope to be able one day to comply with their invitation to come to the seat of their Assembly at Strasburg. And I would also like to express my consideration for the persons who assist the parliamentary work within the general Secretariat; their efforts favour a lively relationship between men and their institutions and contribute to the growth in the European consciousness of the spirit of community planning.

Numerous services require of the functionaries a real dedication which assures their proper functioning- they must accept the restrictions of being far from home and the demands of mutual understanding. I wish you every satisfaction in the performance of tasks useful to the community

of your fellow citizens.

I greet as well the presence in this city of young people of various nations, especially those of the European School and their teachers: they are the sign that the new generations can contribute to a world of brotherhood and peace.

To all of you I offer my encouragement. I assure you of my profound esteem. I ask God to inspire you, to bless you and your families. In my prayer I express the wish that your activity might always be a constructive contribution, in fidelity to the best European traditions, to the cause of right and of justice.

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