



# The Holy See

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## **ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO A DELEGATION OF THE WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS**

*Thursday 22 May 2003*

Dear Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome to the Vatican distinguished representatives of the World Jewish Congress and of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations. Your visit brings to mind the bonds of friendship which have developed between us since the Second Vatican Council issued the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* and placed relations between Jews and Catholics on a new and positive footing.

God's word is a lamp and a light to our path; it keeps us alive and gives us new life (cf. *Ps* 119: 105, 107). This word is given to our Jewish brothers and sisters especially in the Torah. To Christians this word finds its fulfilment in Jesus Christ. Although we hold and interpret this heritage differently, we both feel bound to bear common witness to God's fatherhood and his love for his creatures.

Even if today's world is often marked by violence, repression and exploitation, these realities do not represent the last word about our human destiny. God promises a New Heaven and a New Earth (cf. *Is* 65:17; *Rev* 21:1). We know that God will wipe away all tears (cf. *Is* 25:8), and that mourning and pain will be no more (cf. *Rev* 21:4). Jews and Christians believe that our lives are a journey towards the fulfilment of God's promises.

In light of the rich common religious heritage we share, we can consider the present as a challenging opportunity for joint endeavours of peace and justice in our world. The defence of the dignity of every human being made in the image and likeness of God, is a cause which must engage all believers. This sort of practical cooperation between Christians and Jews requires courage and vision, as well as trust that it is God who brings forth good from our efforts: "Unless

the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain" (*Ps* 127:1).

Dear friends, I wish to express my encouragement for your commitment to bring help to suffering children in Argentina. It is my fervent hope and prayer that the Almighty will bless all your projects and plans. May he accompany you and guide your feet into the way of peace (cf. *Lk* 1:79).