



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE WORLD CONFERENCE
OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR THE PROTECTION
OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS**

Monday, 18 October 2004

1. I am pleased to address a cordial welcome to all of you, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, and I offer you a warm greeting. Through you, I would like my thoughts to reach the many nations of the world that belong to the Interparliamentary Union. I address a special greeting to the President of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy and the Latvian Parliamentarian who have interpreted your common sentiments.

2. Our meeting today fits into the context of the *World Conference of Women Parliamentarians for the Protection of Children and Young Persons*, sponsored by the Presidency of the Italian Parliament. The theme of your work that ends today concerns the hardship in which numerous children and adolescents live in various parts of the world. Your goal includes identifying together effective ways in which institutions can protect minors. In this regard, I express unqualified appreciation for this praiseworthy commitment to the youngest group of the population, while I encourage you to persevere in this direction with the awareness that children and youth are the hope and future of humanity.

They are the human family's most precious treasure, but at the same time, its frailest and most vulnerable members. Hence, it is always necessary to listen to them and pay constant attention to all their legitimate needs and aspirations. No one can be silent or indifferent, especially when innocent children suffer and are marginalized and their human dignity is wounded.

3. The immense cry of pain of abandoned and abused children from many regions of the earth must inspire in public institutions, private associations and all people of good will a new awareness of everyone's duty to protect, defend and educate these frail creatures with love and respect.

If it is to be effective, all action to safeguard children and adolescents should be accompanied by proper consideration of their fundamental rights. Juvenal has expressed this well in his well-known maxim: "The greatest reverence is due to a child" (cf. *The Satires*, XIV, 47). Furthermore, in the Gospel Jesus points to children as our "models" of life and firmly condemns those who do not respect them.

4. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I wish success to the study days of your Congress and I hope, thanks to the contribution of you all, that the dream of building a better future for the new generations may come true. Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of hope, may God grant that humanity see this prophecy of peace come true soon!

I accompany this wish with the assurance of my prayers, as I impart a heartfelt Blessing to you all.