



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO CARDINAL WALTER KASPER
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SECOND CONFERENCE
ON PEACE AND TOLERANCE ORGANIZED BY THE
ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE
IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE APPEAL OF CONSCIENCE FOUNDATION***

To my Venerable Brother

CARDINAL WALTER KASPER

*President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity
and of the Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism*

I was pleased to be informed of the Second Conference on Peace and Tolerance, organized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in conjunction with the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, on the theme: "Dialogue and Understanding in South-East Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia". I entrust you, Venerable Brother, with the task of conveying my cordial greetings to the participants who will be meeting in Istanbul during the coming days, as well as my appreciation for their strong commitment to fostering understanding and cooperation between the followers of different religions. In particular, I ask you to express my fraternal good wishes to His Holiness Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople and to assure Rabbi Arthur Schneider of my spiritual closeness at this time.

The themes of peace and tolerance are of vital importance in a world where rigid attitudes so often give rise to misunderstanding and suffering and can even lead to deadly violence. Dialogue is clearly indispensable if solutions are to be found to the harmful conflicts and tensions that cause so much damage to society. Only through dialogue can there be hope that the world will become a place of peace and fraternity.

It is the duty of every person of good will, and especially of every believer, to help build a peaceful society and to overcome the temptation towards aggressive and futile confrontation between

different cultures and ethnic groups. Each of the world's peoples has a responsibility to make its own particular contribution to peace and harmony by placing its spiritual and cultural heritage and its ethical values at the service of the human family throughout the world. This goal can only be achieved if at the heart of the economic, social and cultural development of each community is a proper respect for life and for the dignity of every human person. A healthy society always promotes respect for the inviolable and inalienable rights of all people. Without "an objective moral grounding, not even democracy is capable of ensuring a stable peace" (*Evangelium vitae*, 70). In this sense, moral relativism undermines the workings of democracy, which by itself is not enough to guarantee tolerance and respect among peoples.

It is of fundamental importance, therefore, to educate in truth, and to foster reconciliation wherever there has been injury. Respect for the rights of others, bearing fruit in sincere and truthful dialogue, will indicate practical steps that can be taken. Every person of good will has a duty to work towards this goal. It is all the more urgent, however, for those who recognize in God the One who is Father of all, whose mercy is freely offered to all, who judges with justice and offers to all his life-giving friendship. For Christians, the Creator's generosity is visible in the face of Him whom God "made to be sin... so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21), Christ our peace and our true reconciliation.

As I entrust these thoughts to you Venerable Brother, I ask you, on the occasion of this Conference, to reaffirm the Catholic Church's strong commitment to work tirelessly for cooperation between peoples, cultures and religions, so that abundant graces and heavenly blessings will descend upon all God's children.

From the Vatican, 4 November 2005

BENEDICT XVI

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