



# The Holy See

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MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS  
**POPE JOHN PAUL II**  
FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE  
**WORLD DAY OF PEACE**

**1 JANUARY 1986 PEACE IS A VALUE WITH NO FRONTIERS**

**NORTH-SOUTH, EAST-WEST:**

**ONLY ONE PEACE** 1. *Peace as a universal value*

At the beginning of the New Year, taking my inspiration from Christ, the Prince of Peace, I renew my commitment and that of the whole Catholic Church to the cause of peace. At the same time I extend to every individual and to all peoples of the earth my earnest greeting and my good wishes: Peace to all of you! Peace to all hearts! Peace is a value of such importance that it must be proclaimed anew and promoted by all. There is no human being who does not benefit from peace. There is no human heart that is not uplifted when peace prevails. All the nations of the world can fully realize their interlinked destinies only if, together, they pursue peace as a universal value.

On the occasion of this 19th World Day of Peace, in the International Year of Peace proclaimed by the United Nations Organization, I offer to everyone as a message of hope my profound conviction: "Peace is a value with no frontiers". It is *a value that responds to the hopes and aspirations of all people and all nations*, of young and old, and of all men and women of good will. This is what I proclaim to everyone, and especially to the leaders of the world.

The question of peace as a universal value needs to be faced with extreme intellectual honesty, sincerity of spirit and an acute sense of responsibility to oneself and to the nations of the earth. I would ask those responsible for political decisions affecting the relationships between North and South, between East and West, to be convinced that there can be **ONLY ONE PEACE**. Those upon whom the future of the world depends, regardless of their political philosophy, economic system or religious commitment, are all called to help construct a single peace on the basis of social justice and the dignity and rights of every human person.

This task requires a radical openness to all humanity and a conviction of the interrelatedness of all the nations of the world. This interrelatedness is expressed in an interdependence that can prove either profoundly advantageous or profoundly destructive. Hence, worldwide solidarity and

cooperation constitute ethical imperatives that appeal to the consciences of individuals and to the responsibilities of all nations. And it is *in this context of ethical imperatives* that I address the whole world for 1 January 1986, proclaiming the universal value of peace.

## 2. *Threats to peace*

In putting forward this vision of peace at the dawn of a new year we are deeply aware that in the present situation peace is also a value that rests on foundations that are very fragile. At first glance our goal to make peace an absolute imperative may seem to be utopian, since our world gives such ample evidence of *excessive self-interest* in the context of opposed political, ideological and economic groups. Caught in the grip of these systems, leaders and various groups are led to pursue their particular aims and their ambitions of power, progress and wealth, without taking sufficiently into account the necessity and duty of international solidarity and cooperation for the benefit of the common good of all peoples who make up the human family.

In this situation *blocs* are formed and maintained which divide and oppose peoples, groups and individuals, making peace precarious and setting up grave obstacles to development. Positions harden and the excessive desire to maintain one's advantage or to increase one's share often becomes the overriding rationale for action. This leads to exploitation of others and the spiral grows towards a polarization that feeds on the fruits of self-interest and the increasing mistrust of others. In such a situation, *it is the small and the weak, the poor and the voiceless who suffer most*. This can happen directly when a poor and comparatively defenceless people is held in subjection by the force of power. It can happen indirectly when economic power is used to disenfranchise people of their rightful share and to hold them in social and economic subjection, generating dissatisfaction and violence. The examples are sadly too numerous today.

*The spectre of nuclear weapons*, which has its origin precisely in the opposition of East and West, remains the most dramatic and compelling example of this. Nuclear weapons are so powerful in their destructive capacities, and nuclear strategies are so inclusive in their designs, that the popular imagination is often paralyzed by fear. This fear is not groundless. The only way to respond to this legitimate fear of the consequences of nuclear destruction is by *progress in negotiations* for the reduction of nuclear weapons and for mutually agreed upon measures that will lessen the likelihood of nuclear warfare. I would ask the nuclear powers once again to reflect on their very grave moral and political responsibility in this matter. It is an obligation that some have also juridically accepted in international agreements; for all it is an obligation by reason of a *basic co-responsibility for peace and development*.

But the threat of nuclear weapons is not the way that conflict is made permanent and increased. *The increasing sale and purchase of arms* - conventional but very sophisticated - is causing dire results. While the major powers have avoided direct conflict, their rivalries have often been acted out in other parts of the world. Local problems and regional difference are aggravated and perpetuated through armaments supplied by wealthier countries and by the ideologizing of local

conflicts by powers that seek regional advantage by exploiting the condition of the poor and defenceless.

Armed conflict is not the only way that the poor bear an unjust share of the burden of today's world. The developing countries must face formidable challenges even when free of such a scourge. In its many dimensions, *underdevelopment remains an ever growing threat to world peace*.

In fact, between the countries which form the "North bloc" and those of the "South bloc" there is a *social and economic abyss* that separates rich from poor. The statistics of recent years show signs of improvement in a few countries but also evidence of a widening of the gap in too many others. Added to this is *the unpredictable and fluctuating financial situation* with its direct impact on countries with *large debts* struggling to achieve some positive development.

In this situation peace as a universal value is in great danger. Even if there is no actual armed conflict as such, where *injustice* exists, it is in fact a cause and potential factor of conflict. In any case a situation of peace in the full sense of its value cannot coexist with injustice. Peace cannot be reduced to the mere absence of conflict; it is the tranquillity and completeness of order. It is lost by the social and economic exploitation by special interest groups which operate internationally or function as elites within developing countries. It is lost by the social divisions that pit rich against poor between States or within States. It is lost when *the use of force* produces the bitter fruit of hatred and division. It is lost when economic exploitation and internal strains on the social fabric leave the people defenceless and disillusioned, a ready prey to the destructive forces of violence. As a value, peace is continually endangered by vested interests, by diverging and opposing interpretations, and even by clever manipulations for the service of ideologies and political systems that have domination as their ultimate aim.

### 3. *Overcoming the current situation*

There are those who claim that the present situation is natural and inevitable. Relations between individuals and between States are said to be characterized by permanent conflict. This doctrinal and political outlook is translated into a model of society and a system of international relations that are dominated by competition and antagonism, in which the strongest prevails. Peace born from such an outlook can only be an "arrangement", suggested by the principle of *Realpolitik*, and as an "arrangement" it seeks not so much to resolve tensions through justice and equity *as to manage differences and conflicts* in order to maintain a kind of balance that will preserve whatever is in the interests of the dominating party. It is clear that "peace" built and maintained on social injustices and ideological conflict will never become a true peace for the world. Such a "peace" cannot deal with the substantial causes of the world's tensions or give to the world *the kind of vision* and values which can resolve the divisions represented by the poles of North-South and East-West.

To those who think that blocs are inevitable we answer that it is possible, indeed necessary, to set up *new types of society and of international relations* which will ensure justice and peace on stable

and universal foundations. Indeed, a healthy realism suggests that such types cannot be simply imposed from above or from outside, or effected only by methods and techniques. This is because the deepest roots of the opposition and tensions that mutilate peace and development are to be found in the heart of man. It is above all the hearts and the attitudes of people that must be changed, and this needs a renewal, *a conversion of individuals*.

If we study the evolution of society in recent years we can see, not only deep wounds, but also signs of a determination on the part of many of our contemporaries and of peoples to overcome the present obstacles in order to bring into being a new international system. This is *the path that humanity must take* if it is to enter into an age of universal peace and integral development.

#### 4. *The path of solidarity and dialogue*

Any new international system capable of overcoming the logic of blocs and opposing forces must be based on the personal commitment of everyone to make the basic and primary needs of humanity the first imperative of international policy. Today countless human beings in all parts of the world have acquired a vivid sense of their fundamental equality, their human dignity and their inalienable rights. At the same time there is a growing awareness that humanity has a profound unity of interests, vocation and destiny, and that all peoples, in the variety and richness of their different national characteristics, are called to form a single family. Added to this is the realization that resources are not unlimited and that needs are immense. Therefore, rather than waste resources or devote them to deadly weapons of destruction, it is necessary to use them above all to satisfy *the primary and basic needs of humanity*.

It is likewise important to note that an awareness is gaining ground of the fact that reconciliation, justice and peace between individuals and between nations given the stage that humanity has reached and the very grave threats that hang over its future - are not merely a noble appeal meant for a few idealists but a condition for survival of life itself. Consequently, the establishment of an order based on justice and peace is vitally needed today, as a clear moral imperative valid for all people and regimes; above ideologies and systems. Together with and above the particular common good of a nation, the need to consider *the common good of the entire family of nations* is quite clearly an ethical and juridical duty.

The right path to a world community in which justice and peace will reign without frontiers among all peoples and on all continents is *the path of solidarity, dialogue and universal brotherhood*. This is the only path possible. Political, economic, social and cultural relations and systems must be imbued with the values of solidarity and dialogue which, in turn, require an *institutional dimension* in the form of special organisms of the world community that will watch over the common good of all peoples.

It is clear that, in order effectively to achieve a world community of this kind, mental outlooks and political views contaminated by the lust for power, by ideologies, by the defence of one's own

privilege and wealth must be abandoned, and replaced by *an openness to sharing and collaboration with all in a spirit of mutual trust.*

That call to recognize the unity of the human family has very real repercussions for our life and for our commitment to peace. It means first of all that we reject the kind of thinking that divides and exploits. It means that we commit ourselves to *a new solidarity*, the solidarity of the human family. It means looking at the North-South tensions and replacing them with a *new relationship, the social solidarity of all.* This social solidarity faces up honestly to the abyss that exists today but it does not acquiesce in any kind of economic determinism. It recognizes all the complexities of a problem that has been allowed to get out of hand for too long, but which can still be rectified by men and women who see themselves in fraternal solidarity with everyone else on this earth. It is true that changes in economic growth patterns have affected all parts of the world and not just the poorest. But the person who sees peace as a universal value will want to use this opportunity *to reduce the differences between North and South* and foster the relationships that will bring them closer together. I am thinking of the prices of raw materials, of the need for technological expertise, of the training of the work force, of the potential productivity of the millions of unemployed, of the debts poor nations are carrying, and of a better and more responsible use of funds within developing countries. I am thinking of so many elements which individually have created tensions and which combined together have polarized North-South relations. *All this can and must be changed.*

If social justice is the means to move towards a peace for all peoples, then it means that we see peace as an indivisible fruit of just and honest relations on every level - social, economic, cultural and ethical - of human life on this earth. This conversion to an attitude of social solidarity also serves to highlight the deficiencies in *the current East-West situation.* In my message to the Second Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Disarmament, I explored many of the elements that are needed to improve the situation between the two major power blocs of East and West. All of the measures recommended then and reaffirmed since that time rest on the solidarity of the human family travelling together *along the path of dialogue.* Dialogue can open many doors closed by the tensions that have marked East-West relations. Dialogue is a means by which people discover one another and discover the good hopes and peaceful aspirations that too often lie hidden in their hearts. True dialogue goes beyond ideologies, and people meet in the reality of their human lives. Dialogue breaks down preconceived notions and artificial barriers. Dialogue brings human beings into contact with one another as members of one human family, with all the richness of their various cultures and histories. A conversion of heart commits people to promoting universal brotherhood; dialogue helps to effect this goal.

Today this dialogue is more needed than ever. Left to themselves, weapons and weapons systems, military strategies and alliances become the instruments of intimidation, mutual recrimination and the consequent dread that affects so much of the human race today. Dialogue considers these instruments in their relationship to human life. I am thinking first of all of the various dialogues in Geneva that are seeking to negotiate reductions and limitations in armaments. But also there are the dialogues being conducted in the context of the multilateral process initiated with the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in

Europe, a process which will be reviewed once again next year in Vienna and continued.

Concerning the dialogue and cooperation between North and South one can think of the important role entrusted to certain bodies such as UNCTAD, and of the Conventions of Lomé, to which the European Community is committed. I am thinking too of the kinds of dialogue that take place when borders are open and people can travel freely. I am thinking of the dialogue that takes place when one culture is enriched by contact with another culture, when scholars are free to communicate, when workers are free to assemble, when young people join forces for the future, when the elderly are reunited with their loved ones. The path of dialogue is a path of discoveries, and the more we discover one another, the more we can replace the tensions of the past with bonds of peace.

### 5. *New relationships built on solidarity and dialogue*

In the spirit of solidarity and with the instruments of dialogue we will learn:

- respect for every human person;
- respect for the true values and cultures of others; respect for the legitimate autonomy and self-determination of others;
- to look beyond ourselves in order to understand and support the good of others;
- to contribute our own resources in social solidarity for the development and growth that come from equity and justice;
- to build the structures that will ensure that social solidarity and dialogue are permanent features of the world we live in.

The tension born of the two blocs will be successfully replaced by the interconnected relations of solidarity and dialogue when we learn to insist on *the primacy of the human person*. The dignity of the person and the defence of his or her human rights are in the balance, because they always suffer in one way or another from those tensions and distortions of the blocs which we have been examining. This can happen in countries where many individual liberties are guaranteed but where individualism and consumerism warp and distort the values of life. It happens in societies where the person is submerged into the collectivity. It can happen in young countries which are eager to take control of their own affairs but which are often forced into certain policies by the powerful, or seduced by the lure of immediate gain at the expense of the people themselves. In all this we must insist on the primacy of the person.

### 6. *The Christian vision and commitment*

My brothers and sisters in the Christian faith find *in Jesus Christ*, in the Gospel message and in the life of the Church lofty reasons and *even more inspiring motives for striving to bring about one single peace in today's world*. The Christian faith has as its focus Jesus Christ, who stretches out his arms on the Cross in order to unite the children of God who were scattered (cf. *Jn 11:52*), to

break down the walls of division, (cf. *Eph 2:14*), and to reconcile the peoples in fraternity and peace. The Cross raised above the world symbolically embraces and has the power to reconcile North and South, East and West.

Christians, enlightened by faith, know that *the ultimate reason* why the world is the scene of divisions, tensions, rivalries, blocs and unjust inequalities, instead of being a place of genuine fraternity, *is sin*, that is to say human moral disorder. But Christians also know that the grace of Christ, which can transform this human condition, is continually being offered to the world, since "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (*Rom 5:20*). *The Church*, which carries on Christ's work and dispenses his redeeming grace, *has precisely as her purpose the reconciling of all individuals and peoples in unity, fraternity and peace*. "The promotion of unity", says the Second Vatican Council, "belongs to the innermost nature of the Church, since she is 'by her relationship with Christ, both a sacramental sign and an instrument of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind' " (*Gaudium et Spes*, 42). The Church, which is one and universal in the variety of the peoples that she brings together, "can form a very close unifying effect on the various communities of individuals and nations, provided they have trust in the Church and guarantee her true freedom to carry out her mission" (*ibid.*).

This vision and these demands which arise from the very heart of faith, should above all cause all Christians to become more aware of situations that are out of harmony with the Gospel, in order to purify and rectify them. At the same time Christians should recognize and value the positive signs attesting that efforts are being made to remedy these situations, efforts which they must effectively support, sustain and strengthen.

Animated by a lively hope, capable of hoping against hope (cf. *Rom 4:18*), Christians must *go beyond the barriers of ideologies and systems*, in order to enter into dialogue with all people of good will, and create new relationships and new forms of solidarity. In this regard I would like to say a word of appreciation and praise to all those who are engaged in international volunteer work and other forms of activity aimed at creating links of sharing and fraternity at a level higher than the various blocs.

### *7. International Year of Peace and final appeal*

Dear friends, brothers and sisters all: at the beginning of a new year I renew my appeal to all of you to put aside hostilities, to break the fetters of the tensions that exist in the world. I appeal to you to turn those tensions of North and South, East and West into new relationships of social solidarity and dialogue. The United Nations Organization has proclaimed 1986 the International Year of Peace. This noble effort deserves our encouragement and support. What better way could there be to further the aims of the Year of Peace than to make the relationships of North-South and East-West the basis of a peace that is universal!

To you, politicians and statesmen, I appeal: to give the leadership that will incite people to renewed effort in this direction.

To you, businessmen, to you who are responsible for financial and commercial organizations, I appeal: to examine anew your responsibilities towards all your brothers and sisters.

To you, military strategists, officers, scientists and technologists, I appeal: to use your expertise in ways that promote dialogue and understanding.

To you, the suffering, the handicapped, those who are physically limited, I appeal: to offer your prayers and your lives in order to break down the barriers that divide the world.

To all of you who believe in God I appeal that you live your lives in the awareness of being one family under the fatherhood of God.

To all of you and to each one of you, young and old, weak and powerful, I appeal: embrace peace as the great unifying value of your lives. Wherever you live on this planet I earnestly exhort you to pursue in solidarity and sincere dialogue:

Peace as a value with no frontiers:

North-South, East-West,

everywhere one people united in only one Peace.

*From the Vatican, 8 December 1985.*

**JOANNES PAULUS PP. II**