



The Holy See

*MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II FOR THE 22nd WORLD DAY OF TOURISM 2001**

1. On the occasion of the Twenty-second World Day of Tourism, which has as its theme "Tourism: A Means of Peace and Dialogue between Civilizations", I warmly greet all those who work in various ways in this important field. Tourism increasingly influences the lives of persons and nations, and the modern means of communication facilitate the movement of millions of travellers in search of rest, contact with nature or deeper knowledge of other peoples' culture. In responding to these desires, the tourism industry presents an ever greater range of itineraries offering new experiences. It can indeed be said that the barriers which kept peoples apart and made them strangers to each other have practically vanished. In the phenomenon of tourism, therefore, we see that the world is increasingly global and interdependent.

In keeping with the United Nations' decision to proclaim the year 2001 as the "International Year for Dialogue between Civilizations", the theme chosen by the World Tourism Organization for the World Day this year is an invitation to reflect upon the contribution that tourism can make to dialogue between civilizations. This was a theme which I addressed in this year's Message for the World Day of Peace, noting that in the dialogue between cultures we find "the obligatory path to the building of a reconciled world, a world able to look with serenity to its own future" (No. 3).

2. The development of tourism, particularly cultural tourism, can undoubtedly benefit both visitors and host communities. Most agree, for instance, that major works of art are important for the insight into civilizations that they provide, and as such they should be more effectively protected by the international community. In some places, however, mass tourism has produced a kind of sub-culture that degrades both the tourists and the host community: it tends to exploit for commercial purposes the traces of "primitive civilizations" and "initiation rites still practiced" in some traditional societies. For the host communities, tourism often becomes an opportunity to sell so-called "exotic" products: hence the phenomenon of sophisticated holiday resorts that are cut off from any real contact with the culture of the host country or that are marked by a "superficial exoticism" offered to the curious who are eager for new sensations. Sadly, this

unchecked desire leads at times to humiliating aberrations, such as the exploitation of women and children in an unscrupulous sex trade which is an intolerable scandal. Every possible measure must be taken to ensure that tourism never becomes a latter-day form of exploitation, but is instead a point of fruitful dialogue between different civilizations in which experiences are exchanged in creative ways.

In a globalized world, tourism is at times an important element in a process of internationalization that can produce radical and irreversible changes in the culture of the host communities. Driven by consumerism, the culture, religious ceremonies and ethnic festivals can become consumer goods which are increasingly debased in order to meet the demands of a larger number of tourists. In order to satisfy these demands, host communities resort to a "reconstructed ethnicity" which is the opposite of a genuine dialogue between civilizations in which each respects the authenticity and identity of the other.

3. There is no doubt that, when properly oriented, tourism becomes an opportunity for dialogue between cultures and a valuable service to peace. By its very nature, tourism contains elements which prepare for this dialogue. In practice, tourism enables us to take a break from daily life, work and the obligations which necessarily bind us. Thus man can "consider his own existence and others' through different eyes: free from his impelling daily concerns, he has an occasion to rediscover his own contemplative dimension and recognize the traces of God in nature and especially in other human beings" (*Angelus*, July 21, 1996).

Tourism puts us in touch with other ways of living, other religions and other perceptions of the world and its history. This helps people to discover themselves and others, both as individuals and as communities, immersed in the vast history of humanity, heirs to and responsible for a universe that is both familiar and strange. This generates a new vision of others that frees us from the risk of remaining closed in on ourselves.

On their travels, tourists discover other places, other landscapes and different ways of perceiving and experiencing nature. Accustomed to their own home and city, the usual landscapes and familiar voices, tourists see other images, hear new sounds and admire the diversity of a world that no-one can grasp entirely. As they do so, they surely grow in appreciation of all that surrounds them and the sense that it must be protected.

Travellers in touch with the wonders of creation perceive the Creator's presence in their hearts, and they are led to exclaim with sentiments of deep gratitude: "How delightful are all his works, how dazzling to the eye!" (*Sir* 42:22).

Instead of shutting themselves away in their own culture, people today are invited more than ever to open themselves to other cultures and to see themselves in the light of other ways of thinking and living. Tourism is a privileged occasion for this dialogue between civilizations because it sets

before the traveller the specific riches that distinguish one civilization from another; because it summons the traveller to remember history and the social, religious and spiritual traditions which history has shaped; and because it favors an ever deepening exchange of riches between people.

4. Therefore, on this World Day of Tourism, I invite all believers to reflect on the positive and negative aspects of tourism in order to bear effective witness to their faith in this very important field of human experience.

Let no-one succumb to the temptation of making free time a period of "rest from values" (cf. *Angelus*, July 4, 1993). On the contrary, an ethic of tourism must be promoted. In this context, the World Ethical Code for Tourism merits attention. It is the fruit of wide-ranging reflection undertaken by various nations and tourism associations, and by the World Tourism Organization. This document is an important step towards ensuring that tourism is seen not just as one among many economic activities, but as a privileged means for the development of individuals and peoples. Through tourism, the cultural heritage of humanity can be placed more effectively at the service of dialogue between civilizations and the promotion of a stable peace. It should be noted too that this World Ethical Code acknowledges the different motives that lead people to travel the length and breadth of the planet, and refers especially to journeys for religious purposes, such as pilgrimages and visits to shrines.

5. The mutual learning which comes through meetings and cultural exchange between individuals and peoples certainly helps to build a more fraternal society based upon greater solidarity. Tourism enables people to live for a time among others and learn about their living conditions, their problems and their religion; it allows travellers peacefully to recognize other peoples' legitimate aspirations and to share them.

A sound ethic of tourism influences the way tourists behave, fosters in them a spirit of solidarity, encourages them to make demands not only on themselves but also on those who organize their trip, and asks them to be agents of dialogue between cultures in order to build up a civilization of love and peace. These contacts foster the growth of peaceful relations between peoples which requires a "tourism with solidarity" based upon everyone's participation. Only the sharing of "like with like" can make intercultural contacts an occasion for understanding, mutual learning and détente among people. Therefore, every form of effective sharing between cultures should be encouraged. People living in tourist resorts should be guaranteed a proper involvement in planning tourist activity, so that the economic, ecological and cultural limits are clearly set out. It would also help if all the institutions of host countries aimed at ensuring that the tourist industry is increasingly at the service of persons and the community. Tourism will thus help to build solidarity among all people and enable civilizations to meet. It will contribute to understanding among individuals and nations, and it will play its part in building a peaceful future. May Christians, whether as tourists or as workers in the industry, always put the stamp of the Gospel on tourism, mindful of the Lord's exhortation: "Whatever house you go into, let your first words be, 'Peace to this house!'. And if a

man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him" (Lk 10:5-6). May believers be witnesses to peace and bring serenity to all those they meet. Praying to the Lord that the experience of travel will always be permeated by Christian values and become a means of evangelization, I entrust all those involved in tourism to the maternal protection of Mary, the Mother of all humanity, and I invoke upon them the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

From the Vatican, June 9, 2001

IOANNES PAULUS II

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n.27 p.11.*

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana