



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO KOREA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,
SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THAILAND **ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II**
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS
ACCREDITED TO THE GOVERNMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA* *Seoul - Apostolic Nunciature*

Friday, 4 May 1984 Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen, a very significant moment in many of the journeys that I have made to different parts of the world, in fulfilment of my apostolic mission to the Catholic communities of the various nations, has been the meeting with the members of the Diplomatic Corps. Now, here in Seoul, it gives me great pleasure to meet you, members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Government of the Republic of Korea. I thank you for coming here this evening. The reasons for my visit are well known to you. The Catholic Church in Korea is celebrating the Two Hundredth Anniversary of its existence in this "Land of Morning Calm". It is a young Church already rich in experience and full of promise for the future. The people of Korea themselves give the impression of being young people - in spite of their long history - with a vitality that holds great promise for the future: a people filled with hopes and noble aspirations, with *an immense yearning for peace* and stability, and for the healing of grievous wounds that still cause profound suffering. The aspirations to peace, security and national unity, which are everywhere more and more felt today, are especially perceptible among the Korean people, and my visit is meant to indicate that these profoundly noble longings are shared by me and by the Church.

1. Members of the Diplomatic Corps, you are the official representatives of your respective countries. You serve your countries by promoting and protecting the interests of your peoples. But it is characteristic of your service that you should also be attentive observers and receptive participants in the cultural, social and psychological life of your host country. As diplomats you are called upon to have *an enhanced sensitivity to the genuine national values* of the country in which you carry out your mission. It is certainly true that the better you know and respect the authentic and original character of the Korean people, the better you will fulfill the important task of promoting mutual understanding and good will. It is certainly also true that understanding and good will, collaboration and co-responsibility are capable of setting in motion *a more general search for peace* between peoples on a world scale.

2. Peace! Much is said about it: yet genuine peace is ever more elusive. On the one hand, the instruments of war - tools of death and destruction - constantly increase. On the other hand, the available structures of dialogue, whether between the bigger nations and alliances or between the parties to limited and localized disputes, have shown themselves to be extremely fragile and vulnerable. Should we then cease to speak out about peace? Or should we not rather find words that will evoke a response of *serious reflection* on the part of all those who have responsibility for the decisions and policies that affect peace? Would it not be a crime to remain silent when what is needed is an effective appeal for a real "conversion of heart" on the part of individuals, governments and nations? *Conversion of heart*, was the theme of my [*Message for the 17th World Day of*](#)

Peace on January 1 of this year: "From a new heart, peace is born". As I pointed out then, I believe that a serious reflection on this theme "permits us to go to the very depths of the problem and is capable of calling into question *the presuppositions that precisely constitute a threat to peace*. Humanity's helplessness to resolve the existing tensions reveals that the obstacles, and likewise the hopes, come from something deeper than the systems themselves" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II, *Nuntius scripto datus ob diem I mensis Ianuarii anni MCMLXXXIV, paci inter nationes fovendae dicatum*, 1, die 8 dec. 1983: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VI, 2 (1983) 1280). This change or "conversion" of heart is not an exclusively Christian or even religious ideal. It is a very fundamental and original human experience, and it applies to nations as well as to individuals. To repeat what I stated in the World Day of Peace Message: "It is a matter of rediscovering clear-sightedness and impartiality with freedom of spirit, the sense of justice with respect for the rights of man, the sense of equity with global solidarity between the rich and the poor, mutual trust and fraternal love".³ Peace is threatened wherever the human spirit is oppressed by poverty or constrained by socio-political or ideological dictates. In our world, peace is seriously threatened by the tensions arising out of ideological differences *between East and West*, and by the growing contrast between the developed countries of *the North* and the developing countries of *the South*. Peace is threatened wherever the fundamental rights of man are ignored or trampled upon, especially the right of religious liberty. Peace is threatened where the integral well-being of the human person is not recognized, promoted and safeguarded; where human beings are not respected in their unique dignity and worth; where they are subordinated to preconceived interests and to the ambition of power in any of its forms; where the poor are exploited by the rich, the weak by the strong, the uneducated by the clever and unscrupulous. Peace is threatened where the human person is made the *victim* of scientific and technological processes, rather than the *beneficiary* of the marvellous capabilities for genuine progress and development which man wrests from the universe. Peace is threatened by events; but these events themselves mirror deeper causes connected with the attitude of the human heart.⁴ There is a serious need for *rethinking basic policies and priorities*. At this time in history there is a great need for wisdom. There is less and less room for gambling with the well-being of the human family. The only option is sincere dialogue and mutual collaboration, for the construction of a more just order in the world. What this just order is, still remains, to some extent, to be discovered through a trust-filled exchange of ideas and values without preconceived bias; a dialogue that has as its object the common good of all and the inalienable rights of every human being.⁵ My appeal to you, ladies and gentlemen of the Diplomatic Corps, is that you use every means at your disposal to promote such a dialogue. *That a new way of thinking may be found*, together with the courage to make a new beginning! The basic moral and psychological conditions underlying the present world situation need to be carefully and impartially re-examined. As I have suggested, perhaps the greatest difficulty in achieving a constructive dialogue is the *lack of mutual trust* between individuals, groups, nations and alliances. There exists an atmosphere of suspicion that causes one side to doubt the good will of the other. This is a serious, objective obstacle to peace, one that follows from the real circumstances affecting the lives of nations. It has to be recognized that this atmosphere of fear, suspicion, distrust and uncertainty is extremely difficult to dispel. The feeling of insecurity is real, and sometimes New Roman justified. This leads, in turn, to ever higher levels of tension aggravated by the inevitable search, by every means and by all sides, *to ensure military superiority* - even to gain the upper-hand by acts of naked terrorism as in Rangoon - or predominance through economic and ideological control. The aspirations of hundreds of millions of human beings for a better life, the hopes of the young for a better world, will inevitably be frustrated unless there is a change of heart and a new beginning!⁶ In a re-examination of the basic moral and psychological presuppositions that constitute a threat to peace, to development and to justice, a fundamental requisite is *the achievement of a new climate of trust*. "Peace must be born of mutual trust between nations rather than imposed on them through fear of one another's weapons" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 82). The same need for a climate of trust

holds true also within a given nation or people. In a special way it is incumbent upon *the leaders of nations* to promote a climate of sincere good will both within and without. And while they cannot ignore the complexity of international relations, they ought to feel themselves obliged to undertake the very grave task of peacemaking. To serve the cause of peace: this is a work of supreme love for mankind. "Today it most certainly demands that leaders extend their thoughts and their spirit beyond the confines of their own nation, that they put aside national selfishness and ambition to dominate other nations, and that they nourish a profound reverence for the whole of humanity" (*Ibid.*). *Reverence for humanity*: this is indeed the nucleus of the whole question. If the human person is revered and respected in his or her inviolable dignity and inalienable rights, then injustice and aggression will be seen for what they are: an arrogance that conceals within itself a certain death-wish because it subverts the balance of the natural order of fundamental equity of rights and duties, giving rise to a situation of moral chaos in which sooner or later all become victims. The evangelical words, "Treat others the way you would have them treat you" (*Matth. 7, 12*), are the expression of a basic requisite for human co-existence, which applies equally to relations between individuals and to relations between nations.⁷ Today, here in Seoul, I take this opportunity to ask you, the members of the Diplomatic Corps - and I wish to extend this appeal to all men and women in positions of responsibility - *to work for peace by working for a change of heart*, by striving to view the world situation with a fresh outlook and with the will to overcome old prejudices and one-sided views. As diplomats, you have special opportunities for upholding and strengthening good will between peoples and governments. In order to do so you must be convinced that peace is possible; that peace is better than war; that human beings deserve to be saved from the present logic of fear and lack of trust. In this hour the world needs you as peacemakers; it needs men and women with a sense of destiny, dedicated to the task of saving our civilization from the various threats that endanger its very existence.⁸ In your diplomatic service in Korea you can see how contrasting ideologies and the passions they unleash give rise to intense suffering. *The anguish and pain of a divided Korea* are emblematic of a divided world that lacks trust and fails to achieve reconciliation in brotherly love. They are a symbol of a world situation that cries out for a response: a new attitude, a new heart. Your mission here, therefore, assumes a particular meaning and weight. I pray that your experience will convince you that only a committed affirmation of fundamental human rights and values, together with an effective respect for the dignity of every human person, will bring an abiding answer to the heartfelt aspirations of all the peoples of the world to live in peace and brotherhood. May Almighty God watch over you and give you wisdom and strength to work for the cause of justice and fraternal harmony among all individuals and peoples. May God make you *instruments of his*

peace.

*AAS 76 (1984), p. 971-976. *Insegnamenti VII*, 1 pp. 1243-1248.

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