



The Holy See

*DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II AD UN GRUPPO DI PARLAMENTARI EUROPEI**

Lunedì, 29 ottobre 1984

Ladies, Gentlemen,

In the course of the brief extraordinary session of your Assembly which you are holding in Rome, you have desired this meeting with the Pope. I appreciate this trusting gesture which allows me to greet the parliamentarians who belong to the seven countries of the WESTERN EUROPEAN UNION, and to express to them my esteem and my encouragement for their important task aimed at strengthening the ties and consolidating the peace in this part of Europe.

1. This Union, a continuation of the Organization of the Treaty of Brussels, took its present form on 23 October 1954. I can understand your desire and your satisfaction in marking today its thirtieth anniversary. During this time, thank God, your countries have not been confronted with war, and this peace corresponds to one of your objectives. But tensions have not been lacking in the world that surrounds us, in Europe itself, and this cannot leave you indifferent, either with respect to the others or with respect to yourselves, for they affect the public opinion of your countries and undermine any true peace. Vicissitudes linked to social, economic and political problems have likewise touched your compatriots, from within, and your Union, from the very beginning, proposed also to contribute to facing the repercussions of these problems.

2. To be sure, other very well structured European or intercon-tinental institutions, to which more-over your countries belong, but which have been enlarged to include other partners, are likewise labouring to supply adequate solutions on the level of security, social rights, cultural exchanges. But - more perhaps for countries like your own, very marked by their distinctive his-tory and by their rich patrimony - experience shows that unity progresses with difficulty in trying to achieve at once effectiveness and respect for the legitimate rights of each. Maturity in this domain is slow; the implementation of collaboration runs up against many obstacles and in

practice must go forward with caution. This is why a solidarity that has deep roots within a limited group can favour a more direct participation of those concerned, it can be expedient and beneficial to the extent that this group remains attentive to the problems of others, open to successively enlarged solidarities, and having in view the realistic conditions for the reinforcing of justice, of liberty and of peace in the world. In this sense, I express my sincere desire that you realize together that which corresponds truly to the common good of your countries, which in turn will serve the interests of Europe and of the world community.

3. Having underlined this service to man, to men without exception, I am sure that you understand that it is not within the competence of the Holy See to enter into the technical, military and political debates that constitute the object of your meeting. But, on another plane, the promotion of a community structure and, I dare say, its defence, depend also on moral and spiritual values, and there, the Church feels very much concerned. We have a certain idea of civilization, which, though it may take concrete form in diverse cultures within Europe as a whole, draws its strength, nevertheless, from imperatives common to all: respect for the liberty and the fundamental rights of man, for his life, his conscience and his spiritual needs, for the vocation of the family, for an authentic democratic participation in the affairs of the city and of the nation, and, inseparable to this, the search for justice for all, for the common good of all, concern for the lot of the poor, the rejection of violence, the struggle against individual and collective egoism, the good use of liberty, education in the profound meaning of life, in short, the service of that human dignity which God himself guarantees.

4. Despite limitations and failures due to human weaknesses, Christianity has given the peoples of Europe a sense of these values. It has set their foundations firm; it has formed generations in this way; it would like to, and it can, even today, accomplish this service. The civilization to which the European countries are justly attached will be strong, it will be able to defend itself from within, if it keeps its soul, if it takes every measure to strengthen convictions and to educate in the direction of the imperatives which I have mentioned. This is a service in which the Church, in which Christians take part with all their might, but which concerns also all men of good will all those who wish to promote the union of Europe and to allow it to make its contribution to the progress of peaceful international relationships and to the development of the countries that count on the example and the support of Europe.

I thank you for your visit. I pray that God inspire you, assist you, in the patient work you perform to strengthen the bonds among your countries. I implore his blessing on your work, on yourselves and, your families, and on your fatherlands.

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