



The Holy See

RADIOMESSAGE OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO THE PEOPLE OF JAPAN

Tuesday, 6 August 1985

To speak of Hiroshima and of Nagasaki is to become vividly aware of the immense pain and horror and death that human beings are capable of inflicting upon one another. But it is also to be conscious of the fact that such a tragic destiny is not inevitable. It *can* and *must* be avoided. Our world needs to regain confidence in its capacity to choose moral good over evil.

The Catholic Church is irrevocably committed to the challenge of promoting genuine peace between peoples and nations, against war and death. The Church sees this challenge as a duty before God, the Lord of Life, and as inexorable service of love towards every man, woman and child on this earth.

I wish to take this opportunity to repeat something which I believe requires much thought. The vast majority of people want peace. Yet “the contemporary world is, as it were, imprisoned in a web of tensions . . . Humanity’s helplessness to resolve the existing tensions reveals that the obstacles, and likewise the hopes, come from something deeper than the systems (on which modern life and international relations are built). It is my deep conviction . . . and is, I hope, the intuition of many men and women of good will, that war has its origins in the human heart. It is man who kills and not his sword, or in our day, his missiles” (IOANNIS PAULI PP. II *Nuntius scripto datus ob diem ad pacem fovendam Calendii Iannuarii a. 1984 celebrandam*, 1, 2, die 8 dec. 1983: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VI, 2 (1983) 1279. 1280) .

It is therefore the human “heart” that must change: from a new heart, peace is born.

In this perspective Hiroshima, from August 6, 1945, and Nagasaki from three days later, have a unique responsibility before the world. The people of these two cities can proclaim, with the force of their own experience, the value of life over death, of peace over war.

Hiroshima is a living witness to what can happen but need not and should never happen. When I visited Hiroshima in 1981 I wished to emphasize that “one must affirm and reaffirm, again and again, that the waging of war is not inevitable or unchangeable”.

Certainly it is not enough to say this, as if peace could be achieved through the repetition of slogans. What is needed is a serious and comprehensive education for peace, and a committed response to the inequalities and injustices rampant in our world. If each individual, group and nation is willing, honestly and sincerely, to follow this path, there will never be another Hiroshima.

The sad experience of forty years ago must be seen as the cornerstone of a new and universally accepted policy of just and peaceful ways to resolve present and future conflicts. Hiroshima’s special role in this process of education for peace is to teach that out of past horror a new outlook and a new hope *can be born*.

With God’s help Hiroshima’s experience of forty years ago will not be in vain. Each day I pray to the Creator that he may teach us to be effective instruments of peace and fraternal solidarity.

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