



The Holy See

COMMON DECLARATION OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II AND HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH TEOCTIST

While we are gathered together in brotherhood and charity, whose source lies in the risen Christ, "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (cf. Jn 14:6) for all humanity, our affectionate thoughts turn to our brothers and sisters in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, who are overwhelmed by so much hardship and suffering.

Fathers and Servants of our communities, united with all those whose mission is to proclaim to today's world the One who "has called us to live in peace" (1 Cor 7:15), and especially united with the Pastors of our Churches in the Balkans, we wish:

- to express our human and spiritual solidarity with all those who, driven from their homes and land and separated from their loved ones, are undergoing the cruel reality of emigration, as well as with the victims of the deadly bombings and all people prevented from living in tranquillity and peace;
- to appeal in God's name to all those who in one way or another are responsible for the current tragedy, that they will have the courage to return to dialogue and find the right conditions for achieving a just and lasting peace that will permit the displaced persons to return to their homes; to end the sufferings of all who live in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Serbs, Albanians and people of other nationalities, and to lay the foundations for a new social harmony among all the peoples of the Federation;
- to encourage the international community and its institutions to use all their legal resources to help the parties in conflict resolve their differences in accordance with the conventions in force, especially those regarding respect for the basic rights of the person and cooperation between sovereign States;
- to support all humanitarian organizations, especially those of Christian inspiration, which are involved in relieving the suffering of the present time, while insisting that nothing be allowed to hinder their efforts to help all who are suffering great hardships, regardless of nationality, language or religion;

- lastly, to appeal to Christians of all denominations to be concretely committed and united in a unanimous and ceaseless prayer for peace and understanding between peoples, entrusting these intentions to the Blessed Virgin so that she will intercede with her Son "who is our peace" (Eph 2:14).

In the name of God, Father of all mankind, we insistently ask the parties involved in the conflict to lay down their arms once and for all, and we vigorously urge them to make prophetic gestures so that a new art of living in the Balkans, marked by respect for all, by brotherhood and by social harmony can grow in this beloved land. This will be a powerful sign in the world's eyes and will show that the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, together with all Europe, can become a place of peace, freedom and harmony for everyone who lives there.

Bucharest, 8 May 1999.

JOHN PAUL II

TEOCTIST