MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL II

FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE DAY OF PEACE

1 JANUARY 1983

DIALOGUE FOR PEACE, A CHALLENGE FOR OUR TIME

1. On the threshold of the New Year 1983, for the sixteenth World Day of Peace, I present to you this message on the theme *Dialogue for Peace, a challenge for our time*. I am addressing it to all those who are, on the one hand, a people responsible for peace: those who preside over the destiny of peoples, international officials, politicians, diplomats. But I am also addressing it to the citizens of each country. All are in fact called by the need to prepare true peace, to maintain it or to reestablish it, on solid and just foundations. Now I am deeply convinced that dialogue – true dialogue – is an essential condition for such peace. Yes, this dialogue is necessary, not only opportune. It is difficult, but it is possible, inspite of the obstacles that realism obliges us to consider. It therefore represents a true challenge, which I invite you to take up. And I do this without any other purpose than that of contributing, myself and the Holy See, to peace, by taking very much to heart the destiny of humanity, as the heir of the message of Christ and as the first one responsible for that message, which is above all a message of Peace for all men.

People's aspiration for peace and dialogue

2. I am sure that in this I am voicing *the basic aspiration* of the men and women of our time. Is not this desire for peace affirmed by all leaders in their good wishes to their nations or in the declarations which they address to other countries? What political party will abstain from including in its programme the quest for peace? As for the International Organizations, they were created to promote and guarantee peace, and they maintain this objective inspite of setbacks. Public opinion itself, when it is not artificially aroused by some passionate feeling of pride or unjust frustration, opts for peaceful solutions. In addition, more and more movements work, even with a lucidity or sincerity that can sometimes leave much to be desired, in order to cause people to realize the need to eliminate, not only all war, but everything which can lead to war. Citizens, in general, wish there to be a climate of peace which will guarantee their search for well-being, particularly when they find themselves faced – as in our own days – by an economic crisis which threatens all workers.

But it would be necessary to go to the logical conclusion of this aspiration, which is happily very widespread: peace will not be established, nor will it be maintained, unless one takes the means. And the means par excellence is adopting an attitude of dialogue, that is of patiently introducing the mechanisms and phases of dialogue wherever peace is threatened or already compromised, in families, in society, between countries or between blocs of countries.

digitised by A.R.A.R.@

Past experience shows the importance of dialogue

3. *The experience of history*, even recent history, shows in fact that dialogue is necessary for true peace. It would be easy to find cases where the conflict seemed fatal, but where war was avoided or abandoned, because the parties believed in the value of dialogue and practised this dialogue, in the course of long and honest discussions. On the contrary, where there have been conflicts – and, contrary to a widespread opinion, one can, alas, number more than a hundred and fifty armed conflicts since the Second World War – it was that dialogue did not really take place, or that it was fortified, made into a snare, or deliberately reduced. The year which has just ended has once more offered the spectacle of violence and war. People have shown that they preferred to use their arms rather than to try to understand one another. Yes, side by side with signs of hope, the year 1982 will leave in many human families a memory of desolation and ruin, a bitter taste of tears and death.

Dialogue for peace is necessary

4. Now, who then would dare to make light of such wars, some of which are still going on, or of states of war, or of the deep frustrations that wars leave behind? Who would dare to envisage, without trembling, yet more extensive and much more terrible wars, which still threaten? Is it not necessary *to give everything in order to avoid war*, even the "limited war" thus euphemistically called by those who are not directly concerned in it, given the evil that every war represents its price that has to be paid in human lives, in suffering, in the devastation of what would be necessary for human life and development, without counting the upset of necessary tranquility, the deterioration of the social fabric, the hardening of mistrust and hatred which wars maintain towards one's neighbour? And today, when even conventional wars become so murderous, when one knows the tragic consequences that nuclear war would have, the need to stop war or to turn aside its threat is all the more imperious. And thus we see as more fundamental the *need to have recourse to dialogue*, to its political strength, which must avoid recourse to arms.

Dialogue for peace is possible

5. But some people today, who consider themselves realists, are doubtful about the possibility of dialogue and its effectiveness, not least when the positions are so tense and irreconcilable that they seem to allow no space for any agreement. How many negative experiences, how many repeated setbacks, would seem to support this disillusioned viewpoint!

And yet, *dialogue for peace is possible*, always possible. It is not a utopia. Moreover, even when dialogue has not seemed possible, and when one has come to the point of armed confrontation, has it not been necessary, after all, after the devastation of war, which has shown the power of the conqueror, but has resolved nothing regarding the rights which were contested, has it not been necessary to seek for dialogue? To tell the truth the conviction which I am affirming here does not repose upon this fatality, but upon a reality: on a consideration of *the profound nature of the human person*. Those who share the Christian faith will be more easily persuaded of this, even if they also believe in the congenita

digitised by A.R.A.R.@

weakness and sin which mocks the human heart since the beginning. But every person, whether a believer or not, while remaining prudent and clear-sighted concerning the possible hardening of his brother's heart, can and must preserve enough confidence in man, in his capacity of being reasonable, in his sense of what is good, of justice, of fairness, in his possibility of brotherly love and hope, which are never totally averted, in order to aim at recourse to dialogue and to the possible resumption of dialogue. Yes, people are finally capable of overcoming divisions, conflicts of interests, even if the oppositions would seem radical ones – especially when each party is convinced that it is defending a just cause – if they believe in the virtue of dialogue, if they accept to meet face to face to seek a peaceful and reasonable solution for conflicts. It is even more necessary that they should not allow themselves to be discouraged by real or apparent failures. It is all the more necessary that they should consent to begin again ceaselessly to propose true dialogue – by removing obstacles and by eliminating the defects of dialogue which I shall speak about later – and to travel to the end of this single road which leads to peace, with all its demands and conditions.

The virtues of true dialogue

6. I therefore consider it useful to recall at this point the *qualities of true dialogue*. They apply in the first place to dialogue between individuals. But I am thinking also and especially of dialogue between social groups, between political forces in a nation, between States within the international community. They also apply to dialogue between the vast human groupings which are distinguished from one another and which face one another on the levels of race, culture, ideology or religion. So the students of warfare recognize that most conflicts find their roots here, at the same time as being connected with the great present day antagonisms of East-West on the one hand, North-South on the other.

Dialogue is a central and essential element of ethical thinking among people, whoever they may be. Under the aspect of an exchange, of communication between human beings that language makes possible, it is in fact a common quest.

Basically, it presupposes the *search for what is true, good and just* for every person, for every group and every society, in the grouping which one is a member of or in the grouping which presents itself as the opposing one.

It therefore demands first of all *openness and welcome:* that each party should explain its thoughts, but should also *listen to* the explanation of the situation such as the other party describes it, sincerely feels it, with the real problems which are proper to the party, its rights, the injustices of which it is aware, the reasonable solutions which it suggests. How could peace become established while one party has not even taken the trouble to consider the conditions of the other party's existence!

To engage in dialogue thus presupposes that each party should accept the *difference* and the *specific nature* of the other party. It also presupposes that each party should become really aware of what separates it from the other, and that it should assume it, with a risk of tension that comes from it, without renouncing through cowardice or constraint what it knows to be true and just, for this would result in a shaky compromise. And, on the other hand, one should not attempt to reduce the other party to a mere object, but one should consider the party to be an intelligent, free and responsible subject.

digitised by A.R.A.R.@

Dialogue is at the same time the search for what is and *which remains common to people*, even in the midst of tensions, opposition and conflicts. In this sense, it is to make the other party a neighbour. It is to accept its contribution, it is to share with it responsibility before truth and justice. It is to suggest and to study all the possible formulas for honest reconciliation, while being able to link to the just defence of the interests and honour of the party which one represents the no less just understanding and respect for the reasons of the other party, as well as the demands of the general good which is common to both.

Furthermore, is it not more and more obvious that all the peoples of the earth find themselves in a situation of mutual interdependence on the economic, political and cultural levels? Any one who attempted to free himself from this solidarity would soon suffer from it himself.

Finally, true dialogue is the search for what is good by peaceful means. It is the persistent determination to have recourse to all the possible formulas of negotiation, meditation and bargaining, to act in such a way that the factors which bring people together will be victorious over the factors of division and hate. It is a recognition of the inalienable dignity of human beings. It rests upon respect for human life. It is a *wager upon the social nature of people*, upon their calling to go forward together, with continuity, by a converging meeting of minds, wills, hearts, towards the goal that the Creator has fixed for them. This goal is to make the world a place for everybody to live in and worthy of everybody.

The political virtue of such a dialogue could not fail to bear fruit for peace. My esteemed predecessor Paul VI devoted to dialogue a large part of his first Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*. He wrote: "Openness to dialogue which is disinterested, objective and frank, is in itself a declaration in favour of free and honest peace. It excludes pretense, rivalry, deceit and betrayal" (*AAS* 56, 1964, p. 654). This virtue of dialogue demands of the political leaders of today much clearsightedness, honesty and courage, not only with regard to other peoples, but with regard to the public opinion of their own people. It presupposes often a true conversion. But there is no other possibility in the face of the threat of war. And once again, it is not an illusion. It would be easy to quote those of our contemporaries who have gained honour by practising it thus.

Obstacles to dialogue, false forms of dialogue

7. On the other hand, it seems to me salutary also to condemn *particular obstacles to the dialogue for peace*.

I am not speaking about the difficulties inherent in political dialogue such as the frequent difficulty of reconciling concrete interests which oppose one another; there is also the frequent difficulty of emphasizing two precarious conditions of existence without being able to point to injustice properly speaking on the part of others. I am thinking of what *damages or prevents the normal process of dialogue*. I have already let it be understood that dialogue is blocked by an *a priori* decision to concede nothing, by a *refusal to listen*, by a claim to be – oneself and only oneself – the measure of justice. This attitude can conceal quite simply the blind and deaf *selfishness* of a people, or more often the *will to power* of its leaders. It also happens that this attitude coincides with an exaggerated and out-of-date concept of the *sovereignty and security* of the State. The State then runs the risk of becoming the object of a so to speak unquestionable worship. It runs

digitised by A.R.A.R.@

the risk of justifying the most questionable undertaking. Orchestrated by the powerful means at the disposal of propaganda, such worship – which is not to be confused with properly understood patriotic attachment to one's own nation – can inhibit the critical sense and moral sense of the more aware citizens and can encourage them to go to war.

For all the more reason one must mention the tactical and deliberate *lie*, which misuses language, which has recourse to the most sophisticated techniques of propaganda, which deceives and distorts dialogue and incites to aggression.

Finally, while certain parties are fostered *by ideologies* which, inspite of their declarations, are opposed to the dignity of the human person, to his or her just aspirations according to the healthy principles of reason, of the natural and eternal law (cf. *Pacem in Terris*, *AAS* 55, 1963, p. 300), ideologies which see in struggle the motive force of history, that see in force the source of light, that see in the discernment of the enemy the ABC of politics, dialogue is fixed and sterile. Or, if it still exists, it is a superficial and falsified reality. It becomes very difficult, not to say impossible, therefore. There follows almost a complete lack of communication between countries and blocs. Even the international institutions are paralyzed. And the setback to dialogue then runs the risk of serving the arms race.

However, even in what can be considered as an impasse to the extent that individuals support such ideologies, the attempt to have a lucid dialogue seems still necessary in order to unblock the situation and to work for the possible establishment of peace on particular points. This is to be done by counting upon common sense, on the possibilities of danger for everyone and on the just aspirations to which the peoples themselves largely adhere.

Dialogue on the national level

8. Dialogue for peace must be established in the first place *on the national level* in order to resolve social conflicts, in order to seek the common good. While bearing in mind the interests of different groups, the common effort for peace must be made ceaselessly, in the exercise of freedoms and duties which are democratic for all, thanks to the structures of participation and thanks to the many means of reconciliation between employers and workers, in the manner of respecting and associating the cultural, ethnic and religious groups which make up a nation. When unfortunately dialogue between government and people is absent, social peace is threatened or absent; it is like a state of war. But history and present day observation show that many countries have succeeded or are succeeding in establishing a true working together, to resolve the conflicts which arise within them, or even to prevent them, by acquiring means of dialogue which are truly effective. They also give themselves a legislation which is in constant evolution, which appropriate jurisdictions cause to be respected in order to correspond to the common good.

Dialogue for peace on the international level

9. If dialogue has shown itself to be producing results on the national level why should it not be so on *the international level*. It is true that the problems are more complicated, the parties and interests in question are more numerous and less homogeneous. But the means par excellence always remains honest and patient dialogue. Where this is missing between nations, every effort must be made

digitised by A.R.A.R.@

to restore it. Where it is insufficient, it must be perfected, dialogue should never be set aside by having recourse to the force of arms in order to resolve conflicts. And the great responsibility which is here engaged is not only that of the opposing parties, whose passion it is difficult to dominate. It is also and much more the responsibility of more powerful countries which fail to help them to restore dialogue, which push them into war, or which tempt them by arms trading.

Dialogue between nations must be based upon the strong conviction that the good of the people cannot be finally accomplished against the good of another people: all have the same rights, the same claims to a worthy life for their citizens. It is also essential to make progress in overcoming artificial divisions, inherited from the past, and the antagonism of blocs. Greater recognition must be given to the increasing interdependence between the nations.

The object of international dialogue

10. If one wishes to state exactly *the object of international dialogue*, one can say that it must be notably concerned with the rights of man, with justice between peoples, with economics, with disarmament, and with the common international good.

Yes, it must be directed towards the recognition of individuals and human groups in their specific nature, in their original character, with the air of freedom which they need, and notably in the exercise of their *basic rights*. On this subject, one can hope for an international juridical system which is more receptive to the appeals of those whose rights are violated and one can hope for jurisdictions which have effective means capable of making their authority respected.

If injustice in all its forms is the first source of violence and war it goes without saying that, in a general way, dialogue for peace cannot be dissociated from *dialogue for justice*, on behalf of peoples who suffer frustration and domination by others.

Dialogue for peace will also necessarily involve a discussion of the rules which govern *economic life*. For the temptation to violence and war will always be present in societies where greed and the search for material goods impels a wealthy minority to refuse the mass of people the satisfaction of the most elementary rights to food, education, health and life (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 69). This is true at the level of every country; but also in the relationships between countries, especially if bilateral relations continue to be prevalent. It is here that openness to multilateral relationships, notably in the framework of the International Organizations, brings an opportunity for dialogue which is less burdened by inequalities and therefore more favourable to justice.

Obviously the object of international dialogue will also concern itself with the dangerous *arms race* in such a way as to reduce it progressively, as I suggested in the message I sent to the United Nations Organization last June, and in conformity with the message that the learned members of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences took on my behalf to the leaders of the nuclear powers. Instead of being at the service of people, the economy is becoming mititarized. Development and well-being are subordinated to security. Science and technology are being degraded into the auxiliaries of war. The Holy See will not grow weary in insisting upon the need to put a stop to the arms race through progressive negotiations, by ap-

digitised by A.R.A.R.@

pealing for a reciprocity. The Holy See will continue to encourage all steps, even the smallest one, of reasonable dialogue in this very important sphere.

But the object of dialogue for peace cannot be reduced to a condemnation of the arms race; it is a question of searching for a whole more just *international order*, consensus on the more equitable sharing of goods, services, knowledge, information, and a firm determination to order these latter to the common good. I know that such a dialogue of which the North-South dialogue forms a part, is very complex; it must be resolutely pursued, in order to prepare the conditions for true peace as we approach the third millenium.

Appeals to leaders

11. After these considerations my message is intended to be above all an appeal to take up the challenge to dialogue for peace.

I address it in the first place to you, the *Heads of State and Government!* May you be able, in order that your people may know real social peace, to permit all the conditions for dialogue and common effort which, when justly established, would not compromise but would favour, in the long term, the common good of the nation, in freedom and independence! May you be able to conduct this dialogue on equal terms with the other countries, and assist the parties in conflict to find the parts of dialogue, of reasonable reconciliation and of just peace!

I also appeal to you, *the diplomats*, whose noble profession it is, among other things, to deal with disputed points and to seek to resolve them through dialogue and negotiation, in order to avoid recourse to arms, or to take the place of the belligerents. It is a work of patience and perseverance, which the Holy See values all the more in view of the fact that it itself is engaged in diplomatic relationships, in which it seeks to cause dialogue to be adopted as the most suitable means of overcoming differences.

I wish above all to repeat my confidence in you, the leaders and members of the *International Organizations*, and to you, the international officials! In the course of the last ten years, your Organizations have too often been the object of attempts at manipulation on the part of nations wishing to exploit such bodies. However it remains true that the present multiplicity of violent clashes, divisions and blocks on which bilateral relations founder, offer the great International Organizations the opportunity to engage upon a qualitative change in their activities; even to reform on certain points their own structures in order to take into account new realities and to enjoy effective power. Whether they are regional or world-wide, your Organizations have an exceptional chance to seize: to regain, in all its fullness, the mission which is theirs by virtue of their origin, their charter and their mandate; *to become the places and instruments par excellence for true dialogue for peace*. Far from allowing themselves to be overcome by paralyzing pessimism and discouragement, they have the possibility of affirming themselves still more as centres of encounter, where one can envisage the questioning of the most audacious of the practices which today prevail in political, economic, monetary and cultural exchanges.

I also make a particular appeal to you *who work in the mass media!* The sad events which the world has experienced in recent times have confirmed the importance of enlightened opinion in order that a conflict might not degenerate into war. Public opinion, in fact, can put a brake on warlike tendencies or, on

digitised by A.R.A.R.@

the contrary, support these same tendencies to the point of blindnes. Now, ass those responsible for radio and television broadcasts, and for the press, you have an ever more preponderant role in this sphere; I encourage you to weigh your responsibility and to show with the greatest objectivity, the rights, the problems and the attitudes of each of the parties in order to promote understanding and dialogue between groups, countries and civilizations.

Finally, I must address myself to every man and woman and also to you, the young; you have many opportunities to break down the barriers of selfishness, lack of understanding and aggression by your way of carrying on a dialogue, every day, in your family, your village, your neighbourhood, in the associations in your city, your region, without forgetting the Non-governmental Organizations. Dialogue for peace is the task of everyone.

Particular reasons for christians to take up the challenge of dialogue

12. And now, I exhort you especially, the *Christians*, to take your part in this dialogue in accordance with the responsibilities that are yours, to pursue them with that quality of openness, frankness and justice that is called for by the *charity* of Christ, to take them up again ceaselessly, with the tenacity and *hope* which faith enables you to have. You also know the need for *conversion* and *prayer*, for the main obstacle for the establishment of justice and peace is to be found *in man's heart, in sin* (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 10), as it was in the heart of Cain when he refused dialogue with his brother Abel (cf. *Genesis* 4:6-9). Jesus has taught us how to listen, to share, to act towards other people as one would wish for oneself, to settle differences while one travels together (cf. *Mt.* 5:25), to pardon. And above all, by His death and Resurrection, He came to deliver us from the sin which sets up one against the other, to give us his peace, to break down the wall which separates the peoples. This is why the Church does not cease to implore the Lord to grant people the gift of His Peace, as the Message of last year emphasized. People are no longer vowed to not understanding one another or to being divided from one another, as at Babel (cf. *Genesis* 11:7-9). In Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit caused the first disciples of the Lord to rediscover, beyond the diversity of languages, the royal road to peace in brotherhood. The Church remains the *wilness of this great hope*.

* * *

May Christians be ever more aware of their vocation to be, against winds and tides, the humble shepherds of that peace which, on Christmas night, God entrusted to us!

And, with them, may all men and women of good will be enabled to take up *this challenge for our time*, even in the midst of the most difficult situations, that is to say, may they be enabled to do everything in order to avoid war and and to commit themselves for this purpose, with increased conviction, to the path which removes the threat of war: *dialogue for peace!*

JOANNES PAULUS PP. II

From the Vatican, 8 December 1982.

digitised by A.R.A.R.@