

# 20th Anniversary of the Pontificate of His Holiness John Paul II

## (National Day of Holy See)



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### Pope John Paul's Peace Message 1998

#### 'Justice for Each Brings Peace for All'

**T**HERE is no peace without justice; no justice without human rights; no human rights without solidarity. This is the core of Pope John Paul II's 1998 Peace Message. The message is first of all a call to public figures to address the threats to peace and justice present in the world. But the message is also addressed to individuals, families and the young, urging them to live in justice and genuine peace and so take part in transforming the world into a 'family of nations', as the Charter of the United Nations declares.

The central part of the papal Message focuses on the United Nations Organization and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Pope recalls that this year is the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, issued by the United Nations 'after the sad experience of war and motivated by the desire to recognize that the same rights belong to every individual and to all peoples'. The principles contained in this Declaration are especially significant as they mark a turning point in the history of individuals and peoples who have suffered violations of their dignity.

There is in the Declaration, the Pope says, a very important statement: 'Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world'. But these, he writes, are elements that today are being violated, or reinterpreted, or willfully misinterpreted. Pope John Paul II does not hesitate to emphasize: 'That document must be observed integrally, in both its spirit and letter.' He underlines two important characteristics of human rights, their universality and indivisibility.

The universality of human rights has been jeopardized both in theory and practice for some time. The Pope says that consideration cannot be given to views 'that would use the argument of cultural specificity to mask violations of human rights'. At the same time, the Pope stresses the need to reject also 'those positions that would weaken the concept of human dignity by denying juridical weight to social, economic and cultural requirements'. In this regard, the Pope refers to developed nations who, while endorsing the theoretical universality of human rights, in fact only modestly assist poor countries to acquire the economic means necessary for their development.

Also pointed out is the ambiguity of the progress brought about by the globalization of economy and fi-

nance. Globalization must also bow to the declarations of the United Nations, whose original mandate, the Pope recalls, is 'promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom'. The human person must not be lost sight of and should be at the centre of every social project. Globalization must take place in a context of solidarity and without marginalization.

The Pope underlines the need to reduce external debt, that 'heavy burden ... which compromises the economies of whole peoples and hinders their social and political progress'. It is also necessary to address the issue of the imbalance between the 'immensely rich' and the 'miserably poor'. Progress towards solidarity with the poor is not a gesture of kindness; it is 'something owed to them in justice'.

Pope John Paul II singles out a series of ills existing within nations: the persistence of extreme poverty, the growing evil of corruption; fraud in the use of public monies; disrespect for the rule of law; improprieties in the administration of justice. All these are affronts to what is right and are threats to peace. Their consequences are often also painful, especially for the poor. Courage is needed to denounce them, to combat them.

Among the other forms of injustice which put peace at risk, and which are particularly offensive, the Pope mentions the evil of unscrupulous money-lending, and the scourge of increasing violence against women and children of both sexes: 'one of the most widespread, shameful and tragic violations of human rights'.

Finally, the Pope recalls that building peace in justice is a responsibility of every person and every nation: 'Peace for all of us comes from the justice of each of us. No one is excused from a task of such importance for the whole of humanity. It concerns every man and every woman, each according to his or her own competence and responsibility.'

The Pope concludes by issuing a special 'call to conversion of heart', to a life-style embodying just living and equal sharing of the fruits of creation, a reversal of the non-values of power, pleasure and wealth. For believers in God, today more than ever, 'their distinguishing mark' must be 'love for the poor, the weak, and the suffering', not first of all out of charity, but for justice's sake. Those living in poverty can wait no longer: they need help now and so have a right to receive immediately what they need'. Justice for each brings peace for all.

#### MESSAGE

Karol Jozef Wojtyla, known as John Paul II since his election to the papacy twenty years ago today, is the 'Holy Father' to the world's some 900 million Catholics. He is the 264th successor to St. Peter and the first Pope in history to come from Poland. He has been Pope three years longer than Pius XI (1922-1939), one year longer than Pius XII (1939-1958) and five years longer than Paul VI (1963-1978). That makes his Pontificate the longest of the twentieth century.

Pope John Paul II's influence extends far beyond the Catholics of his flock, and his face is probably the most recognized one in the world today. Books have been written about his philosophy of personalism, others about his role in the dramatic changes in central and eastern Europe. A new biography has described him as 'the man of the century'.

If he is 'the man of the century', there are surely many reasons for it. Some would see it in Pope Wojtyla's contribution to the realm of ideas and morals and, in particular, his confrontation with what one writer has called the two main crises of the twentieth century: the crisis of truth and the crisis of freedom.

At a time when many would say that it is impossible to have truths to hold on to, the Pope emphatically affirms that truth does indeed exist: the truth about man. That truth transcends particular individuals and cultures and applies to all human beings at all times and all places.

The Pope proclaims that human freedom cannot be detached from its essential relationship to this truth. Freedom indifferent to this truth brings with it appalling consequences: be they Marxism-Leninism, National Socialism or some tyranny still to show itself. Democratic forms of government themselves will stand or fall in the measure that certain 'self-evident truths' continue to be recognized, and safeguarded, or reinterpreted away.

John Paul II, in affirming this primacy of truth, knows that he is going against the intellectual and cultural drift of our time. So be it. He dares to say that if the cause of freedom is divorced from the claims of truth, then human rights' advocacy is little more than ideological posturing, or worse. Human rights' which are 'truly rightful' (i.e. which correspond to the truth of man) are the only rights. Any other 'rights' are bogus. Authentic freedom is ordered to truth, freedom without truth becomes license.

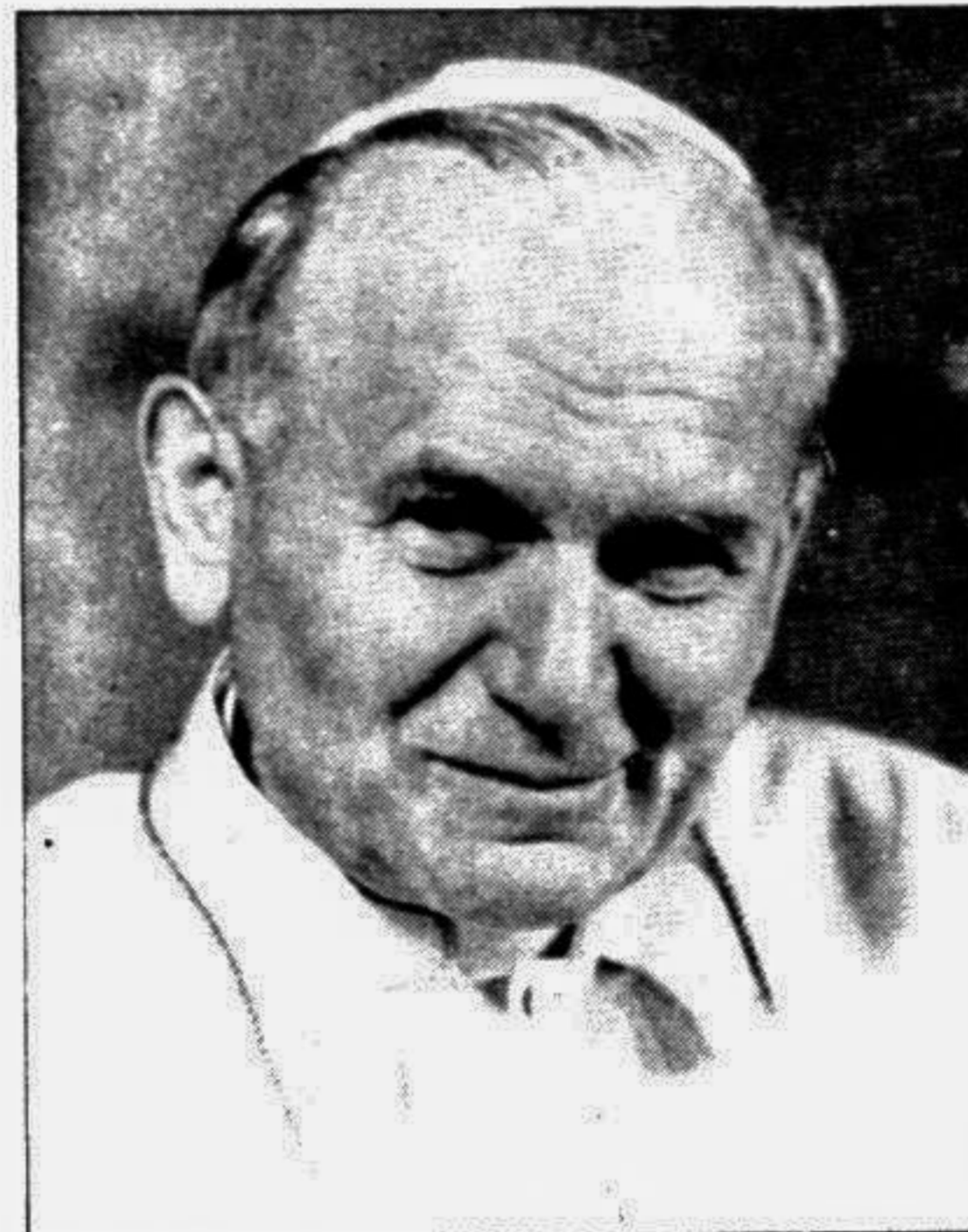
At the end of the second millennium the Pope finds himself among the handful of people who are champions of reason and humanism, that true humanism which is directed towards the transcendent. With no other arms than his word and his prayer, the Pope tirelessly calls everyone to the requirements of the human person and society, to what is just and correct, to truth and freedom.

His position as Sovereign of the 108 acres that constitute the independent Vatican City State gives John Paul II the base for exercising his spiritual authority for the world's Catholics, but also the liberty he requires to speak on behalf of the human person. He need obey no constraints except those of love.

I have the great honour to represent Pope John Paul II in this Country. In his name I greet all the people of Bangladesh and wish them well-being, prosperity and abundant blessings from the Almighty.



Papal Nuncio to Bangladesh  
Archbishop Edward J. Adams

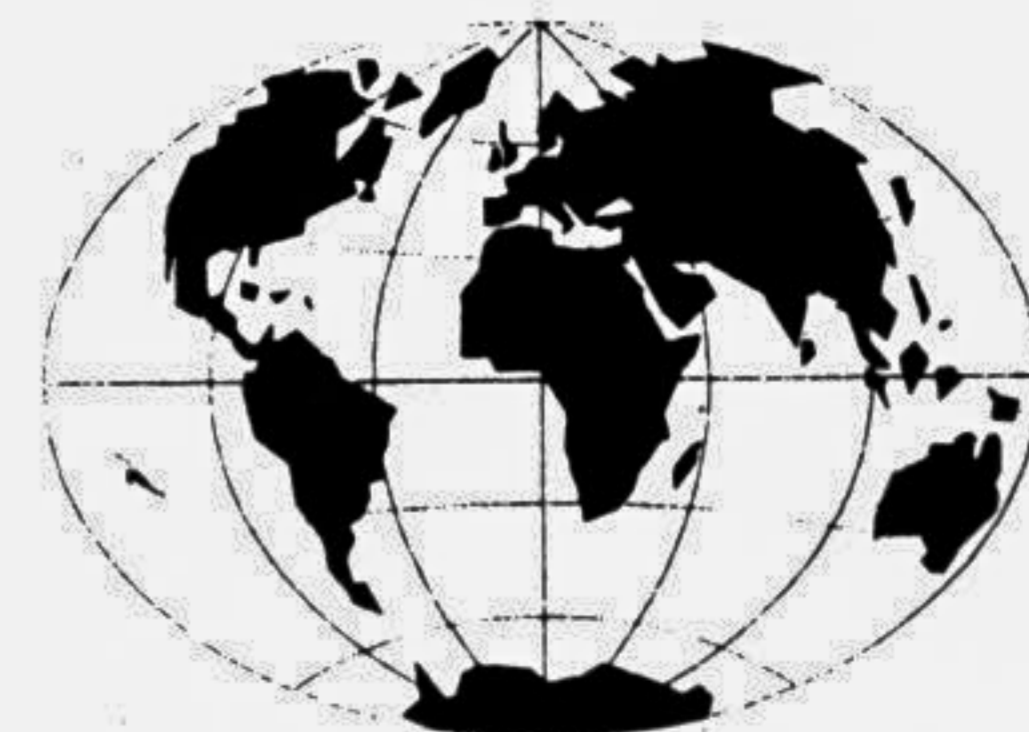


*"May God bless all who promote peace and justice."*

*- Pope John Paul II*

**OUR BEST WISHES  
AND  
HEARTIEST  
CONGRATULATIONS  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
20TH ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE BEGINNING OF  
THE MINISTRY OF  
POPE JOHN PAUL II  
AS SUPREME PASTOR  
OF THE CHURCH.**

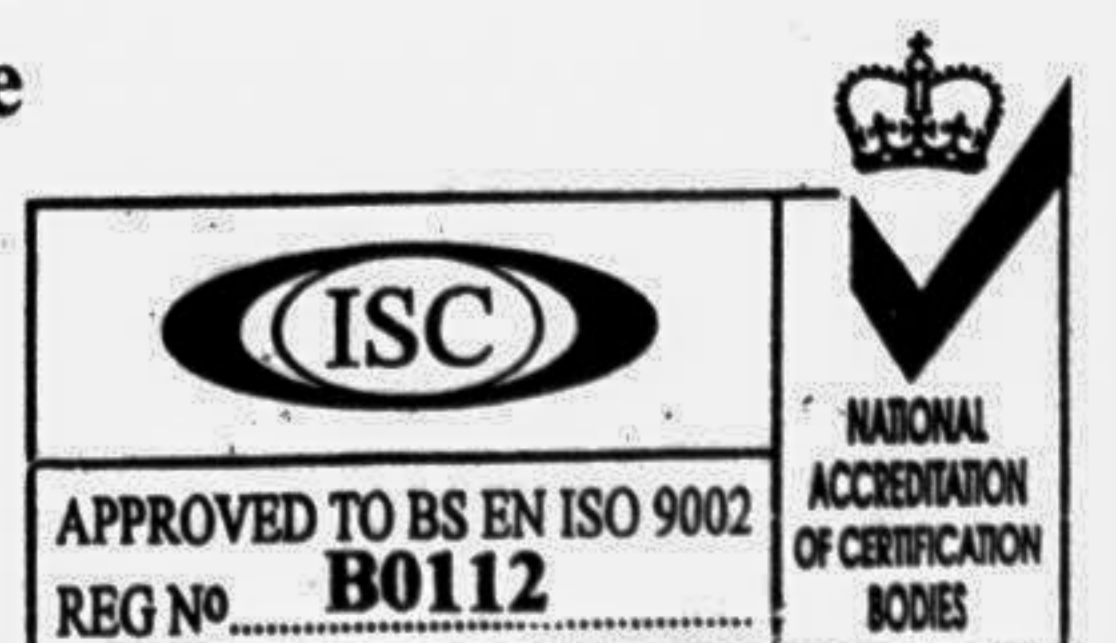
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