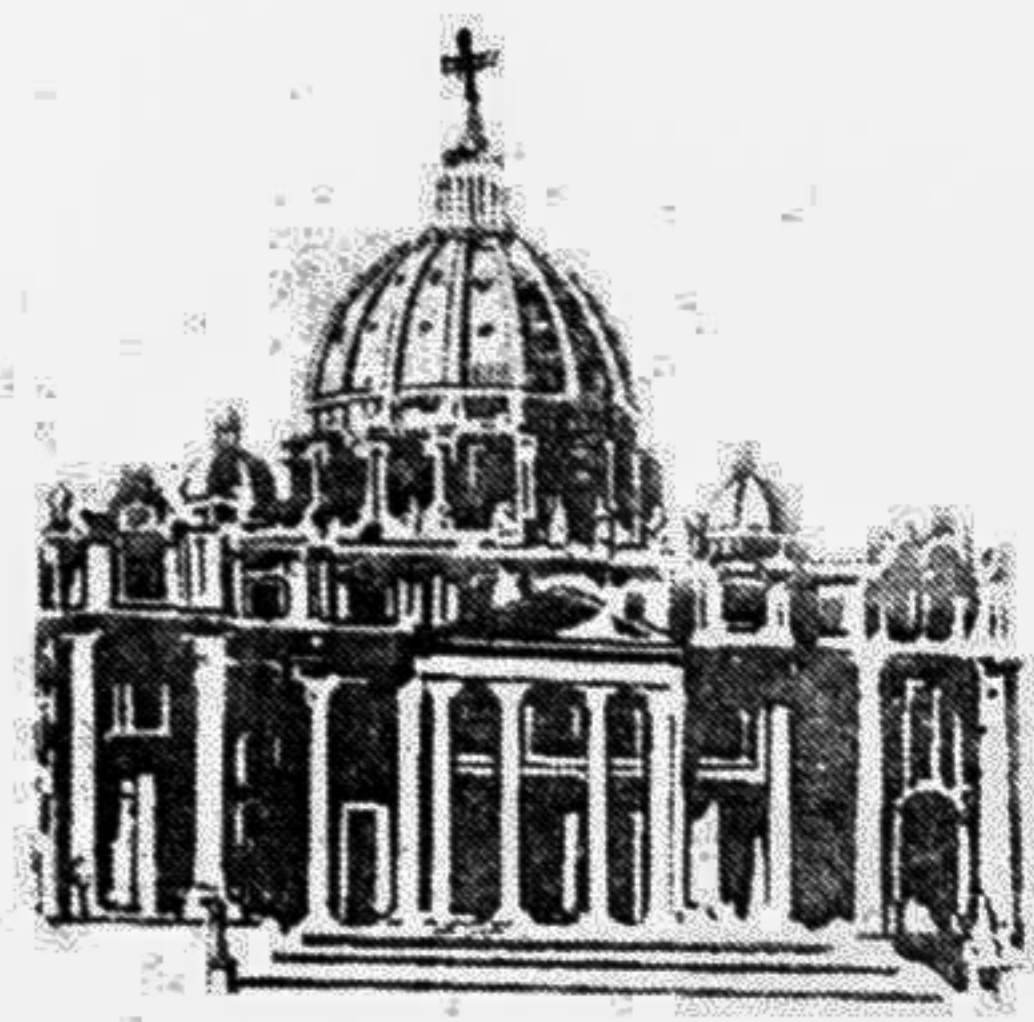


21st Anniversary of the Pontificate of His Holiness John Paul II National Day of Holy See



The Daily Star

Special Supplement

October 22, 1999

Pope John Paul's Peace Message 1999

Respect for Human Rights, the Secret of True Peace

POPE John Paul II calls on every sphere and men and women of good will to recognize, promote and defend all human rights as indivisible and universal and as the only path to safeguard peace, as we approach the threshold of the third millennium. For his Peace Message this year, John Paul II draws inspiration from last year's anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights: "Peace flourishes, he says, when these rights are fully respected, but when they are violated what comes is war".

The Pope seeks passionately to convince the world that a solid and lasting foundation for building peace has to be a regard for human dignity, with the common good of all as an overriding consideration. This presupposes respect for human rights. "When... human rights are ignored or scorned, and when the pursuit of individual interests unjustly prevails over the good of the larger community, then seeds of instability, rebellion and violence are inevitably sown".

In his Message, the Pope summarizes what he has been saying during the twenty-one years of his Pontificate and, alluding to the sad lessons of the twentieth century, points out the dangers of forgetting the transcendent value of the human person. "Before our eyes we have the results of

ideologies such as Marxism, Nazism and Fascism, and of myths like racial superiority, nationalism and ethnic exclusivism". No less pernicious, though not always as obvious, are the effects of materialistic consumerism, "in which the exaltation of the individual and the selfish satisfaction of personal aspirations become the ultimate goal of life".

Once again Karol Wojtyla speaks with a loud voice that human rights are *universal and indivisible*. Regarding their universal nature, in recent years human rights have come under attack under the guise of their needing to be understood, and applied, in the context of local culture. The Pope agrees, but warns that "in every case the levels set for the whole of humanity by the Universal Declaration must be respected". That human rights are indivisible means that no right can be defended separately from the others: "no affront to human dignity can be ignored, whatever its source, whatever form it takes or wherever it occurs".

The Pope lists some rights that appear "particularly exposed to more or less open violation today". The first and most "fundamental right" is the right to life itself. "Human life is sacred and inviolable from conception to its natural end". He stresses the indivisibility of this right that "guarantees to

the unborn child the freedom to be born, and, in the same way, protects the newly born, especially girls, from the crime of infanticide. Equally, it assures the handicapped that they can fully develop their capacities, and ensures adequate care for the sick and the elderly".

The right to life implies also the necessity of ethical criteria in genetic engineering, and the urgent need to reject "all forms of violence, poverty, hunger, armed conflict, criminal trafficking in drugs and arms, and mindless damage to the natural environment". The Pope calls on all movements for peace, be they anti-arms, anti-drugs, or pro-environment, not to concentrate their efforts solely on their own goals but to promote and protect the right to life in its entirety: "no offence against the right to life... is ever unimportant".

A fundamental right, the Pope says, is also *religious freedom* indeed it is "the heart of human rights" in so far as religion shapes people's "vision of the world" and "affects relationships with others". He underlines that every believer must be allowed to manifest his or her faith publicly and privately. The Pope recalls the tensions that can exist between "peoples of diverse religious convictions and cultures" and abhors the use of violence which, he says, "can never claim a religious justification".

nor ever foster the growth of true religious feeling".

The Pope also speaks of what some call the right to *participate in due democratic process*. This is frequently obstructed when the democratic process breaks down because of corruption and favoritism. What results is that people are prevented from benefiting equally from community assets and services, to which everyone has a right. Such an abuse is not just restricted to the individual domain of citizens, but is also extended to nations and peoples.

In the international domain, the Pope highlights the fact that certain economic problems are discussed only by limited circles with the danger that "political and financial power is concentrated in a small number of governments or interest groups". The pursuit of the national and international common good requires the effective exercise, even in the economic sphere, of the right of all people to share in the decisions that affect them.

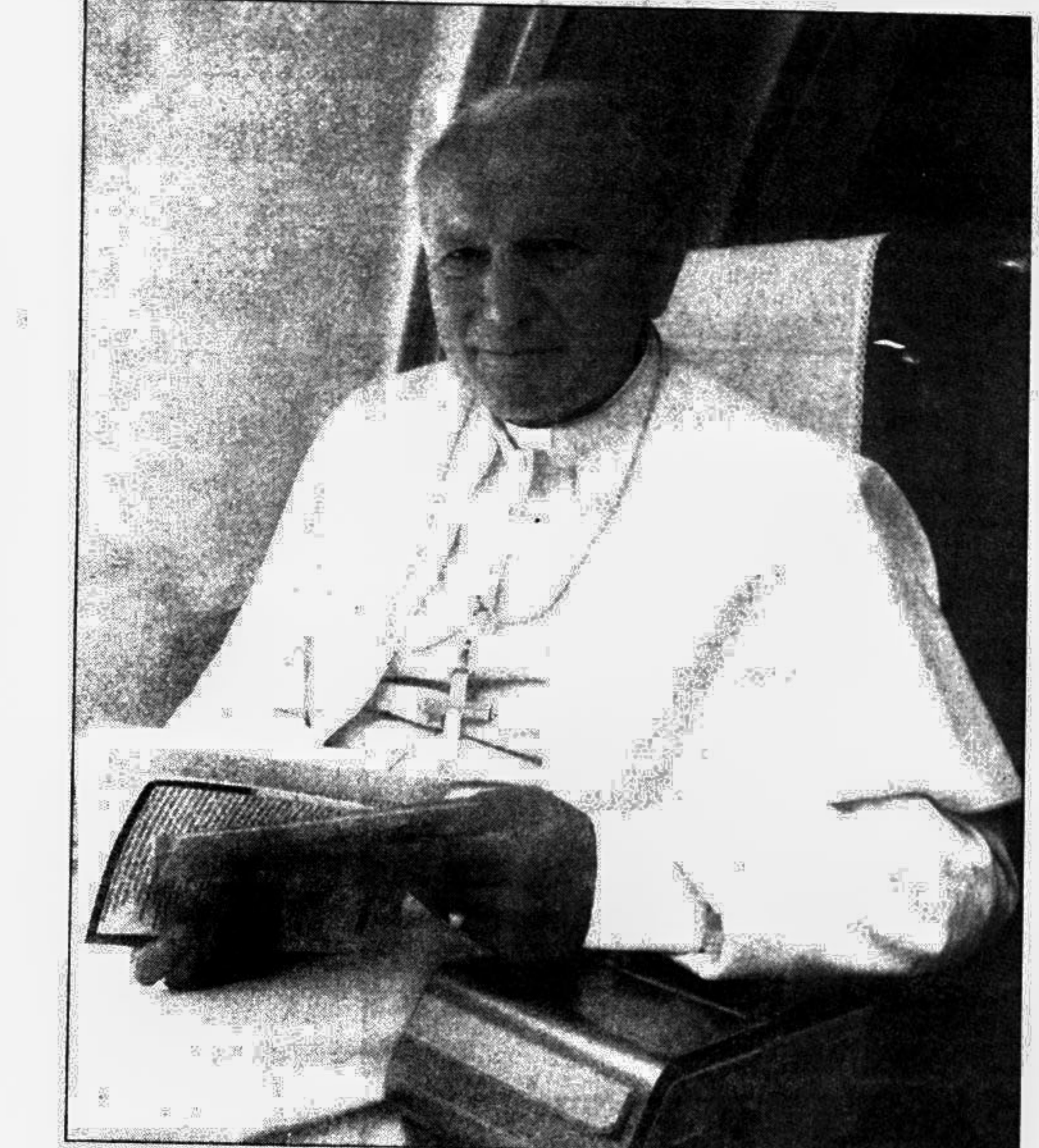
"One of the most tragic forms of discrimination is the denial to ethnic groups and national minorities of the fundamental right to exist as such". The Pope describes the related evil, known as "ethnic cleansing", as "a grave crime against humanity". The recently instituted

International Criminal Court, "if built on a sound legal foundation, could gradually contribute to ensuring on a world scale the effective protection of human rights".

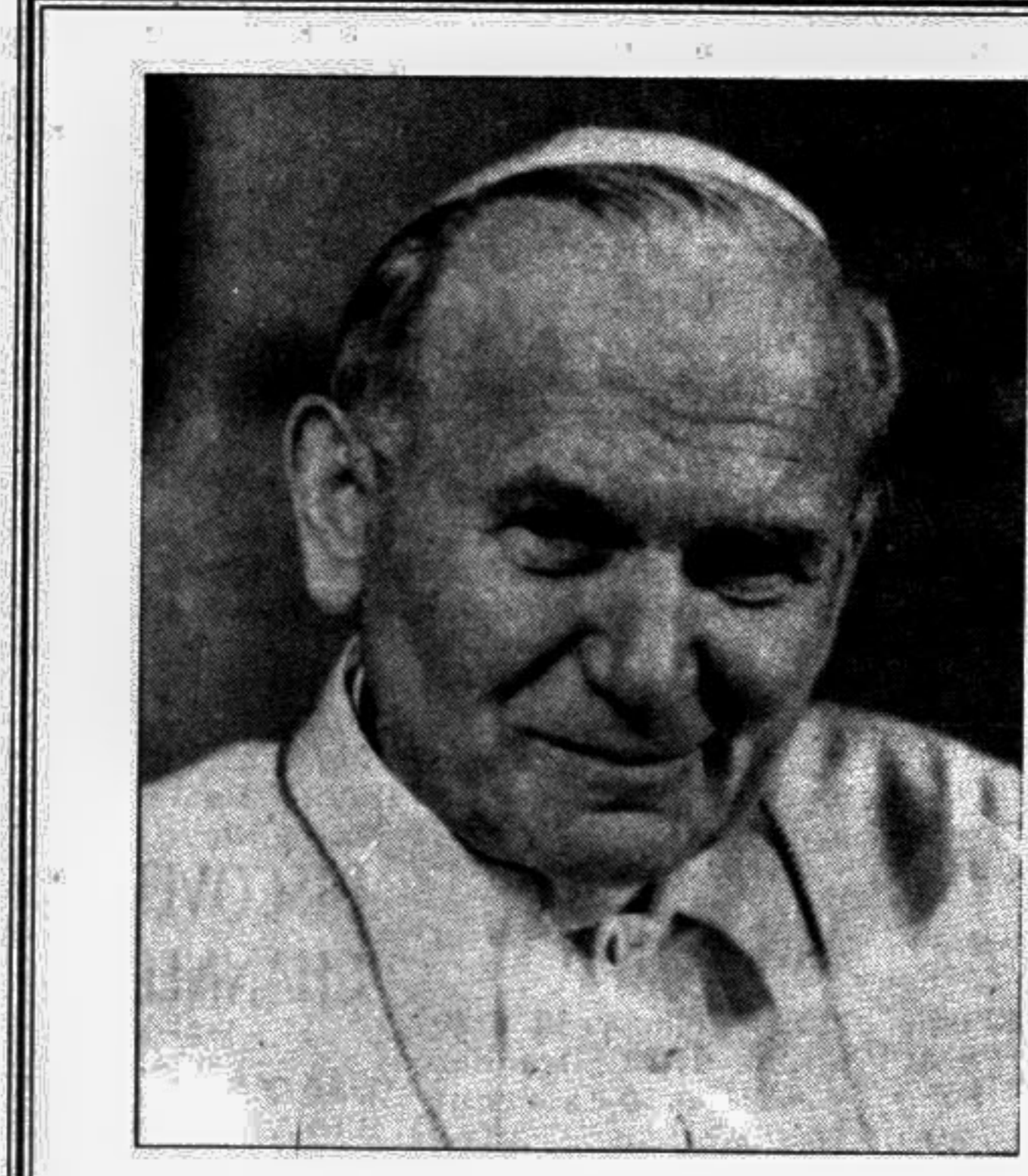
Addressing those with political and economic powers, the Pope urges that their interventions should not be limited to emergency measures but that every effort be made "to enable poor people to take responsibility for their own livelihood". To be free from a system of demeaning assistance programmes, the poor need adequate education and the possibility of work. He speaks also of what others call the right to *global progress in solidarity* and, in connection with the year 2000, asks those responsible for financial relations "to make a sincere effort to find a solution to the frightening problem of the international debt of the poorest nations".

As regards peace in the world, the Pope suggests two concrete steps to bring it about: "eradication of the trafficking in arms directed to countries at war", and support for leaders who choose the path of dialogue. Recalling the thousands of child soldiers in the world and those maimed by antipersonnel mines, the Pope says that children in particular, "need peace; and they have the right to it".

The final paragraphs of the papal Message warn that "no human right is safe if we fail to commit ourselves to safeguarding all of them. When the violation of any fundamental human right is



accepted without reaction, all other rights are placed at risk". The duty to safeguard "the dignity of the poorest and the marginalised and to recognize in a practical way the rights of those who have no rights" falls in particular to believers in God and to all who love peace and wish to consolidate it in the world. They must listen to those who suffer from hunger or persecution, and speak out on their behalf. There could be no better way to usher in a new century, and a new millennium than for all to contribute to respecting a culture of human rights. Respect for human rights is the secret of true peace.



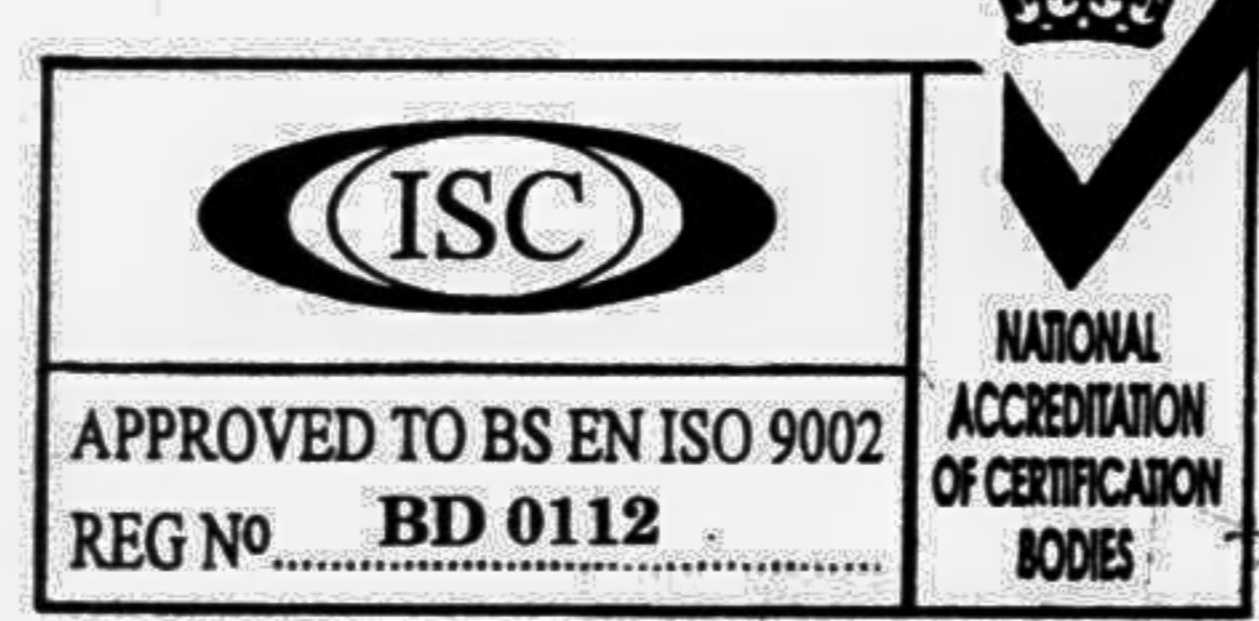
"May God bless all who promote peace and justice."
— Pope John Paul II

OUR BEST WISHES AND HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS ON THE OCCASION OF THE 21ST ANNIVERSARY OF THE BEGINNING OF THE MINISTRY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II AS SUPREME PASTOR OF THE CHURCH

WE AIM TO PROVIDE THE HIGHEST QUALITY SERVICE TO ALL OVER CUSTOMERS ON EVERY OCCASION

HOMEBOUND PACKERS & SHIPPERS LTD.

SW(A) 26 Gulshan Avenue, Gulshan, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh Tel: 871021-22, 600111-5, Fax: 880-2-883416, 880-2-883519 E-Mail: commdept@hbps.bangla.net



MESSAGE

Karol Jozef Wojtyla, known as John Paul II since his election to the papacy twenty-one years ago, is the "Holy Father" to the world's billion Catholics. He is the 263rd successor to St. Peter, the first non-Italian Pope in about 500 years and the first Pope in history to come from Poland. He has been Pope four years longer than Pius XI (1922-1939), two years longer than Pius XII (1939-1958) and six 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 Catholics, and his face is probably the most recognized one in the world today. Books have been written about his role in the fall of Soviet communism, in the democratization of central and eastern Europe and, in particular, in the dramatic changes that have taken place in his own native Poland. While this facet of his pontificate seems to be the one most often noted, actually the first and most important aspect is not political at all.

What inspired Pope Wojtyla to fight communism was another motive. It was a double love that moved him: a love for God and a love for humanity.

He was, and is, a courageous opponent of those who refuse to recognize the truth about the human person and who deny individuals their God-given dignity and freedom. Because of this, John Paul continues to be a defender of those human values that are at risk of being compromised, now also by a modern techno-civilization which obeys only the laws of politics and the market.

In fact, some would see his continued advocacy of the truth about the human person as the principal contribution of this Pope's twenty-one year pontificate. In an age when many have said that it is impossible to have truths to hold on to, John Paul II unashamedly affirms that truth does exist: the truth about man. That truth transcends particular individuals and cultures and applies to all human beings at all times and all places. That truth is the natural underpinning for all human rights.

The Pope proclaims that human freedom cannot be detached from an essential relationship to this truth. A freedom that ignores this truth brings with it appalling consequences. Indeed, democratic forms of government themselves may be in danger of be-

coming "democratic tyrannies" to the extent that certain "self-evident truths" either continue to be recognized, and safeguarded, or abandoned or "reinterpreted" away.

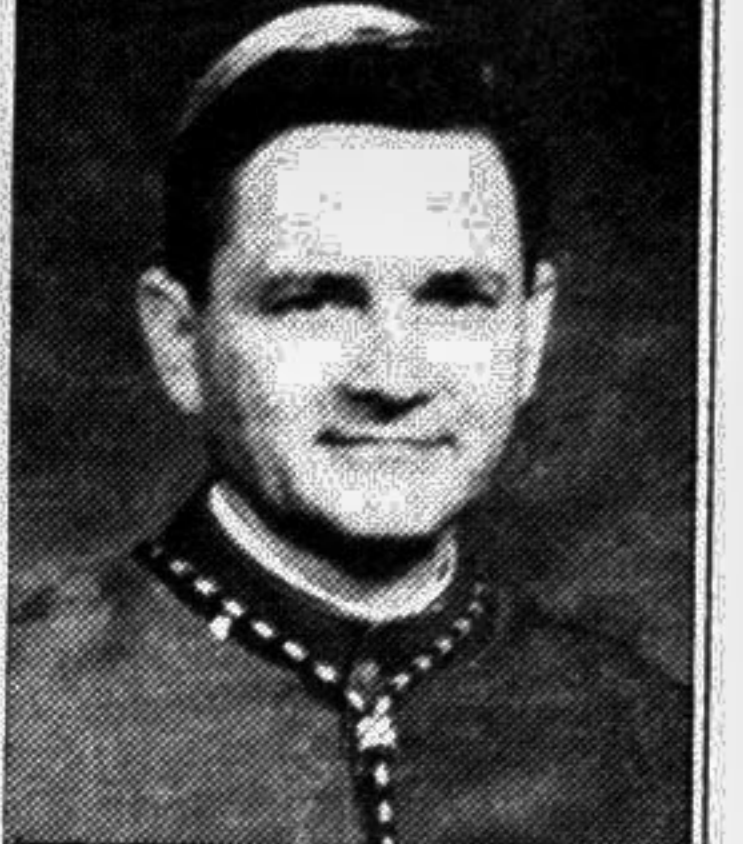
John Paul II, in affirming this primacy of truth, knows that he is going against the intellectual and cultural grain of our time. For him, human "rights" which are "truly right" (i.e. which correspond to the truth of man) are the only rights that can be vindicated. Any other "rights" are bogus and are affronts to God and human nature. 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 proponents of reason and humanism, that true humanism which is inspired by, and directed to, God. 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 submit to no constraints except those of love.

I have the great honour to represent Pope John Paul II in this Country. Once again, in his name, I take the opportunity to 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

Christian-Muslim Relations in the 21st Century

by Cardinal Francis Arinze President of the Vatican's Council for Inter-religious Dialogue.

WHAT kind of relations do Muslims and Christians want in the next century? What steps can be taken to meet the challenges?

Desirable Relations
Knowledge of One Another: Knowledge is the first requirement for building up relationships that are respectful and fruitful. Goodwill is necessary, but it is not enough. Everyone, but especially those who are in positions of leadership in each religion, should try to be acquainted with the basics of the other religion. Christian and Muslim friends can also explain to each other their religious rites and practices: e.g., how they approach their period of fasting and how they celebrate their major feasts.

Acceptance of the Other and Respect for Differences: Correct information will show Christians and Muslims that the two religions do share many beliefs: belief in one God, mighty and merciful; acceptance of the role of prophets; belief in the realities of judgement, in reward and punishment, etc. In the area of morals, there is a common concern that religion occupy an important place in society, that materialism be overcome, that the institution of the family be upheld, that sexual permissiveness be opposed. But there are, of course, fundamen-

tal differences of belief which should be known and recognized. Dialogue requires that Muslims and Christians accept one another with all their similarities and differences.

Engagement in Dialogue: When Muslims and Christians come to know one another and accept and respect one another, they are better able to engage in one form or other of Christian-Muslim dialogue. Four forms of inter-religious relations are generally identified. There is first the area of relations at the level of daily life (in the family, at work or in other social contexts). Here there is opportunity for interaction without religion ever having to be discussed at all. Secondly, there is inter-religious co-operation, such as working together at times of disasters. Dialogue on theological matters is a third form. Finally, there is the possibility of the sharing of personal religious experiences on any number of levels.

Joint Witness to Shared Values: Some people accuse the

world's religions of being the cause of conflicts all throughout history. They think that the more the religions are excluded from private or public life, the greater hope there will be for harmony in society. To overcome such a negative view (held by many), Muslims and Christians, and other believers, should live and interact in such a way that all might see the truth of religion's positive role in their lives.

The Golden Rule, which both religions teach, instructs one to treat others as one would like to be treated. Genuine religion is not the cause of hatred, tension or violence. Every religion worthy of the name teaches love of others. Christians and Muslims should not just coexist. They should also co-operate to build up society.

Joint Promotion of Peace: Among the values shared between Christianity and Islam, peace deserves special mention. Both religions stress its pre-eminence. "Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you",

said Jesus to his Apostles the night before he suffered. For Muslims, Peace is one of the Beautiful Names of God. Does this fact not give added significance to the customary greeting among Muslims: al-salamu 'alaykum?

Christian and Muslim parents, leaders and educators, should be convinced of the necessity of a sincere commitment to peace, beginning with peace between Muslims and Christians. They can share these convictions in the family, at school and, especially, in mosques and churches.

Steps Towards Meeting the Challenges
Healing of Historical Memories: The present and the future also depend to some extent on the past. Relations between Christians and Muslims have not always been peaceful. There have been tensions, conflicts, crusades and holy wars. Nor should we forget the impact of colonialism.

The history of Muslim-Christian relations should be studied in all sincerity and truth. Past wrongs should be accepted and regretted. Pardon on both sides should be sought and given. Only then will reconciliation be possible.

Learning to Exercise Self-
Continued on page 16