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Box 34, Folder 14, John Paul II [Pope] - World Peace Day, 1981-1987.



SECRETARIATUS
AD CHRISTIANORUM UNITATEM FOVENDAM

E Civitate Vaticana, die

16th Dec. 1987

PROT. N. J 509 /87/b
(In responsione fiat mentio huius numeri)

Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews

Rabbi Marc H. TANENBAUM
Director, Interreligious and International Affairs
AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
165 East, 56th Street
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022 (USA)

Dear Rabbi Tanenbaum,

It is a great joy for me to send you Pope John Paul II's message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace, 1st January 1988. The theme is: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: CONDITION FOR PEACE.

Since we are committed to the promotion of a fraternal dialogue through which we hope, by giving witness to God our Creator, to pave the way for peace in the world by fostering the development of human and religious rights, my wish is that this initiative for peace shall be received by all persons of good will and shall yield fruits of justice.

Yours sincerely,

Johannes Cardinal Willebrands
Président



MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE
WORLD DAY OF PEACE

1 JANUARY 1988



LIBRERIA EDITRICE VATICANA
VATICAN CITY

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: CONDITION FOR PEACE

On the first day of the year, I am happy to fulfil a task, now twenty years old, of addressing the Leaders of the Nations and the Heads of the International Organizations, as well as all my brothers and sisters throughout the world who have at heart the cause of peace. For I am deeply convinced that to reflect together on the priceless treasure of peace is in a way to begin to build it.

The above mentioned theme which I would like to submit this year for everybody's consideration arises from three considerations.

In the first place, religious freedom, an essential requirement of the dignity of every person, is a cornerstone of the structure of human rights, and for this reason an irreplaceable factor in the good of individuals and of the whole of society, as well as of the personal fulfilment of each individual. It follows that the freedom of individuals and of communities to profess and practise their religion is an essential element for peaceful human coexistence. Peace, which is built up and consolidated at all levels of human association, puts down its roots in the freedom and openness of consciences to truth.

Moreover, every violation of religious freedom, whether open or hidden, does fundamental damage to the cause of peace, like violations of the other fundamental rights of the human person. Forty years after

the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, to be commemorated next December, we have to admit that millions of people in various parts of the world are still suffering for their religious convictions: they are victims of repressive and oppressive legislation, victims sometimes of open persecution, but more often of subtle forms of discrimination aimed at believers and communities. This state of affairs, in itself intolerable, is also a bad omen for peace.

Furthermore, I wish to recall and hold up as a treasured memory the experience of the Day of Prayer held in Assisi on 27 October 1986. That great gathering of brothers and sisters, brought together in prayer for peace, was a sign for the world. Without any confusion or syncretism, representatives of the major religious communities throughout the world sought to express together their conviction that *peace is a gift from on high*; they sought to evince an active commitment to pray for peace, to welcome it and make it fruitful through practical choices of respect, solidarity and fraternity.

1. *The Dignity and Freedom of the Human Person*

Peace is not only the absence of conflict and war but "the fruit of an order written into human society by its Divine Founder" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 78). It is a work of justice, and for that reason it demands respect for the rights of every person and the fulfilment of corresponding duties. There is an intrinsic connection between the demands of justice, truth and peace (cf. *Pacem in Terris*, I and III).

In accordance with this order, which is willed by the Creator, society is called upon to organize itself and

to carry out its task at the service of man and the common good. The essential lines of this order can be examined by reason and recognized in historical experience. The modern development of the social sciences has enriched humanity's awareness of this order, despite all the ideological distortions and the conflicts which sometimes seem to obscure that awareness.

For this reason, the Catholic Church—while seeking to fulfil faithfully her mission of proclaiming the salvation that comes from Christ alone (cf. *Acts* 4: 12)—turns to all people without distinction and invites them to recognize the laws of the natural order that govern human association and determine the conditions for peace.

The foundation and goal of the social order is the human person, as a subject of inalienable rights which are not conferred from outside but which arise from the person's very nature. Nothing and nobody can destroy them, and no external constraint can annihilate them, for they are rooted in what is most profoundly human. Likewise, the person is not merely the subject of social, cultural and historical conditioning, for it is proper to man, who has a spiritual soul, to tend towards a goal that transcends the changing conditions of his existence. No human power may obstruct the realization of man as a person.

From this first and fundamental principle of the social order, namely that society exists for the person, it follows that every society must be organized in such a way as to enable and indeed to help man to realize his vocation in full freedom.

Freedom is man's most noble prerogative. Beginning with the most private options, all individuals must be able to express themselves in an act of conscious

choice, each following his or her own conscience. Without freedom, human acts are empty and valueless.

The freedom with which man has been endowed by the Creator is the capacity always given to him to seek what is true by using his intelligence and to embrace without reserve the good to which he naturally aspires, without being subjected to undue pressures, constraints or violence of any kind. It belongs to the dignity of the person to be able to respond to the moral imperative of one's own conscience in the search for truth. And the truth—as the Second Vatican Council emphasized—“is to be sought after in a manner proper to the dignity of the human person and his social nature” (*Dignitatis Humanae*, 3) and “cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth” (*ibid.*, 1).

The freedom of the individual in seeking the truth and in the corresponding profession of his or her religious convictions must be specifically guaranteed within the juridical structure of society; that is, it must be recognized and confirmed by civil law as a personal and inalienable right in order to be safeguarded from any kind of coercion by individuals, social groups or any human power (cf. *ibid.*, 2).

It is quite clear that freedom of conscience and of religion does not mean a relativization of the objective truth which every human being is morally obliged to seek. In an organized society, such freedom is only a translation, in institutional form, of that order within which God has ordained that his creatures should be able to know and accept his eternal offer of a covenant, and be able to correspond to it as free and responsible persons.

The civil and social right to religious freedom, inasmuch as it touches the most intimate sphere of the spirit,

is a point of reference of the other fundamental rights and in some way becomes a measure of them. For it is a matter of respecting the individual's most jealously guarded autonomy, thus making it possible to act according to the dictates of conscience both in private choices and in social life. The State cannot claim authority, direct or indirect, over a person's religious convictions. It cannot arrogate to itself the right to impose or to impede the profession or public practice of religion by a person or a community. In this matter, it is the duty of civil authorities to ensure that the rights of individuals and communities are equally respected, and at the same time it is their duty to safeguard proper public order.

Even in cases where the State grants a special juridical position to a particular religion, there is a duty to ensure that the right to freedom of conscience is legally recognized and effectively respected for all citizens, and also for foreigners living in the country even temporarily for reasons of employment and the like.

In no case may the civil organization set itself up as the substitute for the conscience of the citizens, nor may it remove or take the place of the freedom of action of religious associations. A right social order requires that all—as individuals and in groups—should be able to profess their religious convictions with full respect for others.

On 1 September 1980, when I addressed the Heads of State who signed the *Helsinki Final Act*, I intended to emphasize, among other things, that authentic religious freedom requires that the rights deriving from the social and public dimension of the profession of faith and of belonging to an organized religious community must also be guaranteed.

In this regard, speaking to the General Assembly of the United Nations, I expressed my conviction that "respect for the dignity of the human person would seem to demand that, when the exact tenor of the exercise of religious freedom is being discussed or determined with a view to national laws or international conventions, the institutions that are by their nature at the service of religion should also be brought in" (AAS [1979], p. 1158).

2. A common Patrimony

It must be acknowledged that the principles of which we have spoken are the common patrimony of most civil societies today, as also of the organization of international society, which has drawn up appropriate norms. These form part of the culture of our time, as is demonstrated by the ever more accurate and detailed discussion which, especially in recent years, has taken place in meetings and congresses of scholars and experts on every practical aspect of religious freedom. Nonetheless, it frequently happens that the right to religious freedom is incorrectly understood and insufficiently respected.

In the first place there are spontaneous outbreaks of intolerance, more or less haphazard, sometimes the result of ignorance or mistaken ideas, which attack individuals or communities and cause disputes, bad feelings and hostility, to the detriment of peace and a united commitment to the common good.

In various countries, laws and administrative practices limit or in fact annul the rights formally recognized by the Constitution for individual believers and religious groups.

Furthermore, there still exist today laws and regulations which do not recognize the fundamental right to

religious freedom, or which envisage completely unjustified limitations, not to mention cases of provisions which are actually discriminatory in nature and which sometimes amount to open persecution.

Various organizations, public and private, national and international, have been established, especially in recent years, for the defence of those who in many parts of the world are—by reason of their religious convictions—victims of situations which are illegal and detrimental to the whole human family. Before public opinion these bodies rightly express the complaints and protests of those brothers and sisters who often have no voice of their own.

The Catholic Church, for her part, constantly shows her solidarity with all those suffering from discrimination and persecution because of their faith. She works with steady resolve and patient persistence for the remedying of such situations. For this purpose the Holy See seeks to make its own specific contribution in international assemblies which discuss the safeguarding of human rights and of peace. In the same sense is to be understood the action, necessarily more discreet but no less solicitous, of the Apostolic See and its Representatives in contacts with the political authorities of the whole world.

3. Religious Freedom and Peace

Everybody is aware that the religious dimension, rooted in the human conscience, has a specific impact on the subject of peace, and that every attempt to impede or to coerce its free expression inevitably has grave negative effects upon the possibility of a peaceful society.

An obvious consideration presents itself. As I wrote in the already mentioned Letter to the Heads of State

who signed the *Helsinki Final Act*, religious freedom, in so far as it touches the most intimate sphere of the spirit, sustains and is as it were the *raison d'être* of other freedoms. And the profession of a religion, although it consists primarily in interior acts of the spirit, involves the entire experience of human life, and thus all its manifestations.

Religious freedom also contributes decisively to producing citizens who are genuinely free: for by making possible the quest for and acceptance of the truth about man and the world it helps all individuals to gain a full understanding of their own dignity. It also helps them to take up their duties with greater responsibility. An honest relationship with the truth is an essential condition for authentic freedom (cf. *Redemptor Hominis*, 12).

In this sense it can be said that religious freedom is a very important means of strengthening a people's moral integrity. Civil society can count on believers who, because of their deep convictions, will not only not succumb readily to dominating ideologies or trends but will endeavour to act in accordance with their aspirations to all that is true and right, an essential condition for securing peace (cf. *Dignitatis Humanae*, 8).

But there is more. By leading people to a new understanding of their human condition, religious faith brings people, through a sincere gift of themselves, to a complete fellowship with other human beings (cf. *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 59). Faith brings people together and unites them, makes them see others as their brothers and sisters; it makes them more attentive, more responsible, more generous in their commitment to the common good. It is not just a matter of feeling better disposed to collaborating with others by reason of the fact that one's own rights are ensured and protected;

it is rather a matter of drawing from the deepest resources of a right conscience higher incentives for the task of building a more just and more human society.

Within each State—or rather within each people—this need for a shared sense of common responsibility is more keenly felt today. But, as my predecessor Pope Paul VI had occasion to ask, how can a State call for total trust and collaboration when, in a kind of “negative confessionalism”, it proclaims itself atheistic and when, within a certain framework, it declares its respect for the beliefs of individuals but in fact takes up an attitude opposed to the faith of a part of its citizens? (cf. *Speech to the Diplomatic Corps*, 14 January 1978). On the contrary, an effort should be made to ensure that the opposition between the religious view of the world and the agnostic or even atheistic view, which is one of the “signs of the times” of our age, should be kept within human limits of fairness and respect, without doing harm to the fundamental rights of conscience of any man or woman living on this planet (cf. John Paul II, *Speech to the United Nations*, 2 October 1979; No. 20).

Above and beyond persisting situations of war and injustice, we are witnessing today a movement towards an increasing union of peoples and nations, on the various levels of politics, economics, culture, etc. This tendency, which appears to be unstoppable but which meets with continuous and serious obstacles, receives a profound and not insignificant impulse from religious conviction. For the latter, by excluding recourse to violent methods for resolving conflicts and by educating to fraternal solidarity and love, fosters understanding and reconciliation, and can provide fresh moral resources for the solution of questions in the face of which humanity today seems weak and powerless.

4. The Responsibility of Religious People

The State's duties regarding the exercise of the right of religious freedom are matched by the precise and grave responsibilities of men and women for both their individual religious profession and the organization and life of the communities to which they belong.

In the first place, the leaders of religious bodies are obliged to present their teaching without allowing themselves to be conditioned by personal, political or social interests, and in ways that conform to the requirements of peaceful coexistence and respect for the freedom of each individual.

Similarly, the followers of the various religions should, individually and collectively, express their convictions and organize their worship and all other specific activities with respect for the rights of those who do not belong to that religion or do not profess any creed.

And it is precisely with regard to peace, mankind's supreme aspiration, that every religious community and every individual believer can test the genuineness of their commitment to solidarity with their brothers and sisters. Today as perhaps never before, the world looks expectantly to the various religions, precisely in matters concerning peace.

At the same time there is reason to rejoice that both the leaders of the religious bodies and the ordinary faithful are showing an ever keener interest and a livelier desire to work for peace. These intentions deserve to be encouraged and appropriately coordinated in order to increase their effectiveness. For this purpose, it is necessary to go to the roots.

That is what happened last year at Assisi. In response to my fraternal invitation, the leaders of the world's

main religions gathered in order to affirm together—while remaining faithful to each one's religious conviction—their common commitment to building peace.

In the spirit of Assisi there is here a question of a binding and demanding gift, a gift to be cultivated and brought to maturity: in mutual acceptance and respect, renouncing ideological intimidation and violence, promoting institutions and methods of joint action and cooperation between peoples and nations, but especially in education for peace, considered at a level well above the necessary and hoped for reform of structures—peace that presupposes the conversion of hearts.

5. *The Commitment of the Followers of Christ*

We recognize with joy that among the *Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communion*s this process is already happily begun. I would like to express the hope that it will continue to receive a fresh impulse and that it will spread and bring about a broader involvement of all the adherents of the world's religions, in the great challenge of peace.

As the Pastor of the universal Church I would be failing in my duty if I did not speak out in favour of respect for the inalienable right of the Gospel to be proclaimed "to the whole creation" (*Mk 16: 15*), and if I did not repeat that God has ordered civil society to the service of the human person, to whom belongs the freedom to seek and embrace the truth. The commitment to truth, freedom, justice and peace is a mark of the followers of Christ the Lord. For we bear in our hearts the revealed certainty that God the Father, through his crucified Son, who "is our peace" (*Eph 2: 14*), has made

of us a new People, which has as a condition the freedom of the children of God and as a statute the precept of fraternal love.

As the People of the New Covenant, we know that our freedom finds its highest expression in total acceptance of the divine call to salvation, and with the Apostle John we profess: "we know and believe the love God has for us" (1 Jn 4:16), the love manifested in his Word made flesh. From this free and liberating act of faith there flow a new vision of the world, a new approach to our brethren; a new way of existing as a leaven in society. It is the "new commandment" (Jn 13:34) which the Lord has given us; it is "his peace" (cf. Jn 14:27)—not the peace of the world that is always imperfect—which he has left us.

We have to live completely and responsibly the freedom which comes to us from being children of God and which opens our eyes to transcendent prospects. We have to commit ourselves with all our strength to living the new commandment, allowing ourselves to be enlightened by the peace which has been given to us and radiating it to those around us. "By this", the Lord admonishes us, "all men will know that you are my disciples" (Jn 13:35).

I am well aware that this formidable commitment is beyond our poor powers. How many divisions and misunderstandings we Christians bear a certain responsibility for, and how much more remains for us to build, in our own spirits, in our families and communities, beneath the banner of reconciliation and fraternal charity! And, as we have to admit, the conditions of the world make the task no easier. The temptation to violence is always there. Selfishness, materialism and pride make man ever less free and

society ever less open to the demands of brotherhood. Be this as it may, we must not become discouraged: Jesus, our Master and Lord, is with us always, to the close of the age (cf. *Mt* 28:20).

My thoughts turn with particular affection to those brothers and sisters who are deprived of the freedom to profess their Christian faith, to all who are suffering persecution for the name of Christ, to those who for his sake must suffer rejection and humiliation. I want these brothers and sisters of ours to feel our spiritual closeness, our solidarity, and the comfort of our prayer. We know that their sacrifice, to the extent that it is joined to Christ's, bears fruits of true peace.

Brothers and sisters in the faith: the commitment to peace is one of the testimonies which today makes us credible in the eyes of the world, and especially in the eyes of the younger generation. The great challenge facing modern man, the challenge to his true freedom, is found in the Gospel Beatitude: "Blessed are the peacemakers" (*Mt* 5:9).

The world needs peace, the world ardently desires peace. Let us pray that all men and women, enjoying religious freedom, may be able to live in peace.

From the Vatican, 8 December 1987.

Joannes Paulus PP. II



3339 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20008

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 3294/80/8

January 5, 1981

This No. Should Be Prefixed to the Answer


Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
National Director
Interreligious Affairs
The American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
New York, New York 10022

Dear Rabbi Tanenbaum:

Upon the request of His Eminence, Cardinal Casaroli, Secretary of State to His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, I am pleased to forward the attached copy of the Holy Father's Message for the celebration of the Day of Peace, January 1, 1981.

Permit me to extend to you my heartfelt wishes for God's choice blessings in the year so recently begun.

Sincerely yours,


Monsignor Clemente Faccani
Charge d'Affaires, a.i.



MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE
DAY OF PEACE

1 JANUARY 1981



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TO SERVE PEACE, RESPECT FREEDOM

To all of you who are building peace,
To all of you who are the leaders of the nations,
To you, brothers and sisters, citizens of the world,
To you young people, who dare to dream of a better
world,

It is to all of you, men and women of good will, that I address myself today, in order to invite you, on the occasion of the Fourteenth World Day of Peace (1 January 1981), to think about the state of the world and about the great cause of peace. I do this from a powerful conviction: that peace is possible, but that it is also something that has to be continually won, a good thing that has to be attained through ever renewed efforts. Each generation feels in a new way the permanent need for peace in the face of the daily problems of life. Yes, it is every day that the ideal of peace has to be made into a concrete reality by each one of us.

To serve peace, respect freedom

1. In presenting to you today the theme of freedom as the subject of your thoughts, I am following the line of Pope John XXIII in his Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*,

when he put forward freedom as one of the "four pillars that support the house of peace". Freedom responds to a deep and widespread aspiration of the modern world, and this is shown for example by the frequency with which the term "freedom" is used, even though not always in the same sense, by believers and non-believers, scientists and economists, those who live in democratic societies and those who live under totalitarian regimes. Each one gives the term a special nuance, and even a profoundly different meaning. As we seek to develop our service of peace, we must therefore understand clearly the real nature of this true freedom that is at one and the same time the root of peace and its fruit.

Conditions that call for a fresh examination today

2. Peace must be realized in truth; it must be built upon justice; it must be animated by love; it must be brought to being in freedom (cf. *Pacem in Terris*). Without a deep and universal respect for freedom, peace will elude man. We have only to look around us to be convinced of this. For the spectacle that meets our eyes at the beginning of the Eighties seems hardly reassuring, although large numbers of men and women, whether ordinary citizens or leaders of society, are very worried about peace, often to the point of desperation. Their aspirations do not find realization in true peace, because of the absence of freedom, or the violation of freedom, or again because of the ambiguous or mistaken way in which freedom is exercised.

For what can be the freedom of nations, whose existence, aspirations and reactions are conditioned by fear

instead of mutual trust, by oppression instead of the free pursuit of their common good? Freedom is wounded when the relationships between peoples are based not upon respect for the equal dignity of each but upon the right of the most powerful, upon the attitude of dominant blocs and upon military or political imperialism. The freedom of nations is wounded when small nations are forced to align themselves with large ones, in order to ensure their right to independent existence or to survival. Freedom is wounded when dialogue between equal partners is no longer possible, by reason of economic or financial domination exercised by privileged and powerful nations.

And within a nation, on the political level, does peace have a real chance when the free sharing in collective decisions or the free enjoyment of individual liberties is not guaranteed? There is no true freedom—which is the foundation of peace—when all powers are concentrated in the hands of a single social class, a single race or a single group, or when the common good is merged with the interests of a single party that is identified with the State. There is no true freedom when the freedoms of individuals are absorbed by a collective group “denying all transcendence to man and his personal and collective history” (*Octogesima Adveniens*, 26). True freedom is also absent when various forms of anarchy, set up as a theory, lead to the systematic denial or challenging of all authority, leading in extreme cases to political terrorism or to blind acts of violence, whether spontaneous or organized. Nor is there any true freedom when internal security is set up as the single and supreme norm regulating relationships between authority and the citizens, as if it were the only means—or the

main one—of maintaining peace. In this context, one cannot ignore the problem of systematic or selective repression—accompanied by assassination and torture, cases of disappearance or banishment—suffered by so many people, including bishops, priests, religious and Christian lay people working in the service of their neighbour.

3. On the social level, it is hard to describe as truly free those men and women who lack the guarantee of honest and adequate employment, or all those people in country villages who are still the victims of regrettable servitude, often the heritage of a dependent past or colonial mentality. Nor is there enough freedom for those who, as the result of uncontrolled industrial, urban or bureaucratic development, find themselves caught up in a gigantic machine, in a tangle of unwanted or unmanageable procedures that leave no room for a social development worthy of man. Freedom is also reduced—and more than appears at first sight—in a society that lets itself be guided by the dogma of indefinite material growth, by the pursuit of wealth or by the arms race. The economic crisis now affecting all societies, if it is not faced with principles of another order, could easily lead to the adoption of measures that would reduce still further the measure of freedom that peace needs if it is to blossom and flourish.

At the level of the mind, freedom can also suffer from manipulation of various kinds. This is the case when the social communications media misuse their power and disregard strict objectivity. It is also the case when psychological procedures are used without regard for the dignity of the person. Moreover, freedom will always

remain very incomplete, or at least hard to exercise, in the case of men, women and children for whom illiteracy constitutes a kind of daily slavery in a world that presupposes education.

At the beginning of 1981, which has been declared by the United Nations the Year of the Disabled, it is also fitting to include in this picture those of our brothers and sisters who have suffered damage to their physical or mental completeness. Is our society sufficiently aware of its duty to set in motion all means that will enable them to share more freely in life with others, to have access to the human advancement that corresponds to their rights as human beings and to their abilities, in accordance with their dignity?

*Encouraging efforts already being made
and praiseworthy accomplishments*

4. However, side by side with these typical examples in which more or less serious conditioning obstructs the proper exercise of freedom and could be changed, there is also another side to the picture of the modern world seeking peace in freedom, and it is a positive one. It is the image of a multitude of men and women who believe in this ideal, who are committed to placing freedom at the service of peace, to respecting it, to promoting it, to upholding and defending it, and who are ready to make the efforts and even sacrifices that this commitment demands. I am thinking of all the Heads of State, Heads of Government, politicians, international officials and civil leaders at all levels who are trying to make available to everyone the freedoms that have been solemnly proclaimed. My thoughts also go to those who know that

freedom cannot be divided, and who as a result seek out, with full objectivity, in situations as they change, fresh attacks on freedom in the sphere of personal life, family life, cultural life, social and economic development and political life. I am thinking of men and women throughout the world, fired by a solidarity that knows no frontiers, for whom it is impossible, in a civilization that has become worldwide, to isolate their own freedom from the freedom that their brothers and sisters in other continents are struggling to gain and safeguard. I am thinking especially of the young people who believe that one only becomes really free by striving to obtain for others that same freedom.

Freedom is rooted in man

5. Freedom in its essence is within man, is connatural to the human person and is the distinctive sign of man's nature. The freedom of the individual finds its basis in man's transcendent dignity: a dignity given to him by God, his Creator, and which directs him towards God. Because he has been created in God's image (cf. *Gen* 1:27), man is inseparable from freedom, that freedom which no external force or constraint can ever take away, and which constitutes his fundamental right, both as an individual and as a member of society. Man is free because he possesses the faculty of self-determination with regard to what is true and what is good. He is free because he possesses the faculty of choice, "as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint" (Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 17). To be free is to be able to choose and to want to choose; it is to live according to one's conscience.

Promoting free individuals in a free society

6. Man must therefore be able to make his choices in accordance with values to which he gives his support; this is the way in which he will show his responsibility, and it is up to society to favour this freedom, while taking into account the common good.

The first and the most fundamental of these values is always man's relationship to God as expressed in his religious convictions. Religious freedom thus becomes the basis of the other freedoms. On the eve of the meeting in Madrid on European security and cooperation, I had the occasion to repeat what I have not ceased to state since the beginning of my ministry: "Freedom of conscience and religion... is... a primary and inalienable right of the person; far more, to the extent that it touches upon the most intimate sphere of the spirit, one can even say that it underlies the *raison d'être*, intimately anchored in each person, of the other freedoms" (Religious freedom and the final Document of Helsinki, 5: cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 15 November 1980).

The various authorities in society must make possible the exercise of true freedom in all its manifestations. They must endeavour to guarantee each individual's possibility of realizing his or her human potential to the full. They must allow each person a juridically protected domain of independence, so that every human being can live, individually and collectively, in accordance with the demands of his or her conscience. Moreover, this freedom is called for in the major international pacts and other documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Conventions on the same subject, as also in the vast

majority of national Constitutions. This is only right, since the State, as the recipient of a mandate given by its citizens, must not only recognize the basic freedoms of individuals but also protect and foster them. The State will play this positive role by respecting the rule of law and seeking the common good in accordance with the demands of the moral law. Similarly, the freely constituted intermediate groups will make their own contribution to safeguarding and advancing these freedoms. This noble task concerns all living forces in society.

7. But freedom is not merely a right that one claims for oneself. It is also a duty that one undertakes with regard to others. If it is really to serve peace, the freedom of each human individual and each community must respect the freedoms and rights of other individuals and communities. This respect sets a limit to freedom, but it also gives it its logic and its dignity, since we are by nature social beings.

Some kinds of "freedom" do not really deserve the name, and we must take care to defend true freedom against various counterfeits. For example, the consumer society—that excess of goods not needed by man—can in a way constitute an abuse of freedom, when the more and more insatiable pursuit of goods is not subjected to the law of justice and of social love. Such consumerism involves a limitation of the freedom of others; and from the viewpoint of international solidarity it even affects whole societies which are unable to obtain the minimum of goods required for their essential needs. The existence of areas of absolute poverty in the world and the existence of hunger and malnutrition pose a

serious question to the countries that have developed freely, without regard for those countries lacking even the minimum and perhaps at times at their expense. It could even be said that within the rich countries the uncontrolled pursuit of material goods and all kinds of services offers only an apparent increase of freedom to those who benefit from them, since it sets up as a basic human value the possession of things, instead of aiming at a certain material prosperity as the condition and means for the full development of the talents of the individual in collaboration with and in harmony with his fellowmen.

Likewise, a society built on a purely materialistic basis denies people their freedom when it submits individual freedoms to economic domination, when it represses man's spiritual creativity in the name of a false ideological harmony, when it denies people the exercise of their right of association, when in practice it reduces to nothing the power to participate in public affairs or acts in such a way that in this field individualism and civic and social non-participation become the general attitude.

Finally, true freedom is not advanced in the permissive society, which confuses freedom with licence to do anything whatever and which in the name of freedom proclaims a kind of general amorality. It is a caricature of freedom to claim that people are free to organize their lives with no reference to moral values, and to say that society does not have to ensure the protection and advancement of ethical values. Such an attitude is destructive of freedom and peace. There are many examples of this mistaken idea of freedom, such as the elimination of human life by legalized or generally accepted abortion.

Promoting free peoples in a free world

8. Respect for the freedom of peoples and nations is an integral part of peace. Wars continue to break out and destruction has fallen upon peoples and whole cultures because the sovereignty of a people or a nation was not respected. Every continent has seen and suffered from fratricidal wars and struggles caused by one nation's attempts to limit another's autonomy. One can even wonder if war may not become—or remain—a normal fact of our civilization, with “limited” armed conflicts going on for long periods without exciting public concern, or with a succession of civil wars. The direct causes are many and complex: territorial expansionism, ideological imperialism for the triumph of which weapons of total annihilation are stockpiled, economic exploitation deliberately perpetuated, obsession with territorial security, ethnic differences exploited by arms dealers, and many other causes as well. Whatever their reason, these wars contain elements of injustice, contempt or hatred, and attacks on freedom. I stressed this when speaking last year to the General Assembly of the United Nations: “The spirit of war, in its basic primordial meaning, springs up and grows to maturity where the inalienable rights of man are violated. This is a new and deeply relevant vision of the cause of peace, one that goes deeper and is more radical. It is a vision that sees the genesis, and in a sense the substance, of war in the more complex forms emanating from injustice viewed in all its various aspects: this injustice first attacks human rights and thereby destroys the organic unity of the social order and it then affects the whole system of international relations” (11).

9. Without a willingness to respect the freedom of every people, nation and culture, and without a world-wide consensus on this subject, it will be difficult to create the conditions for peace. But we must have the courage to believe they are possible. This presupposes a conscious public commitment on the part of each nation and its government to renounce claims and designs injurious to other nations. In other words, it presupposes a refusal to accept any doctrine of national or cultural supremacy. There must also be a willingness to respect the internal processes of other nations, to recognize their personality within the human family, and therefore to be ready to question and correct any policy that would in fact be an interference or an exploitation in the economic, social or cultural spheres. In this context I would plead for a greater effort by the community of nations to aid young or developing nations to attain true control of their resources and self-sufficiency in food and the essential needs of life. I beg the rich countries to direct their aid with the primary aim of actively eliminating absolute poverty.

The preparation of juridical documents has its place in improving relations between nations. In order that freedom may be respected, it is also necessary to contribute to the progressive codification of the applications that flow from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In this matter of respecting the identity of each people, I would like to include particularly the right to see its religious traditions respected both internally and by other nations, and the right to participate in free exchanges in the religious, cultural, scientific and educational spheres.

A climate of trust and responsibility

10. The best guarantee of freedom and its real attainment depends upon the responsibility of individuals and peoples, upon the concrete efforts of each person at his own level, in his immediate environment, nationally and internationally. For freedom is not something that is given. It is something to be constantly won. It goes hand in hand with the sense of responsibility that everyone must have. One does not make people free without at the same time making them more aware of the demands of the common good and making them more responsible.

For this purpose, a climate of mutual trust must be established and strengthened. Without it freedom cannot develop. Everyone can see that this is an indispensable condition for true peace and the primary expression thereof. But, like freedom and peace, this trust is not something that is given: it is something that has to be gained, something that has to be deserved. When an individual does not accept his responsibility for the common good, when a nation does not feel that it has a share of responsibility for the destiny of the world, trust is jeopardized. This is even more so if one uses others for one's own selfish purposes, or simply indulges in manoeuvres aimed at making one's own interests prevail over the legitimate interests of others. Only trust merited by concrete action in favour of the common good will make possible, between individuals and nations, the respect for freedom which is a service to peace.

The freedom of the children of God

11. Let me in conclusion address more especially those who are united with me in belief in Christ. Man cannot be genuinely free or foster true freedom unless he recognizes and lives the transcendence of his being over the world and his relationship with God; for freedom is always the freedom of man made in the image of his Creator. The Christian finds in the Gospel support for this conviction and a deeper understanding of it. Christ, the Redeemer of man, makes us free. The Apostle John records the words: "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (*Jn* 8: 36). And the Apostle Paul adds: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (*2 Cor* 3: 17). To be set free from injustice, fear, constraint and suffering would be useless, if we were to remain slaves in the depths of our hearts, slaves of sin. To be truly free, man must be set free from this slavery and transformed into a new creature. The radical freedom of man thus lies at the deepest level: the level of openness to God by conversion of heart, for it is in man's heart that the roots of every form of subjection, every violation of freedom, are found. Finally for the Christian, freedom does not come from man himself: it is manifested in obedience to the will of God and in fidelity to his love. It is then that the disciple of Christ finds the strength to fight for freedom in this world. Faced by the difficulties of this task, he will not allow himself to be driven to inertia and discouragement, for he places his hope in God, who supports and makes fruitful what is done in accordance with his Spirit.

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Freedom is the measure of the maturity of man and of the nation. So I cannot end this message without renewing the urgent appeal that I made to you at the beginning: like peace, freedom is an effort to be ceaselessly renewed in order to give man his full humanity. Let us not await the peace of the balance of terror. Let us not accept violence as the way to peace. Let us instead begin by respecting true freedom: the resulting peace will be able to satisfy the world's expectations; for it will be a peace built on justice, a peace founded on the incomparable dignity of the free human being.

From the Vatican, 8 December 1980.

Joannes Paulus PP. II

זכר אלה יעקב וישראל