



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE

«EAST-WEST SPIRITUAL EXCHANGES» *Wednesday 9 September 1987* Dear Friends, I am very pleased to welcome you, the participants in the "East-West Spiritual Exchanges". In particular, I greet Reverend Hirata Seiko, President of the Institute for Zen Studies, as well as the Japanese monks and nuns who have come to Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries in order to gain a deeper understanding of the Christian spiritual traditions. Through the attentive listening and the mutual respect which characterize these exchanges interreligious dialogue can reach an increasingly more profound level. At the previous inter-monastic exchange, the Christian monks who lived at your monasteries had the occasion to appreciate your time-honoured traditions. They were very moved by your fraternal hospitality. I wish to thank you for your exquisite courtesy and I would hope that such encounters will continue in the future. Last year some of you joined us in Assisi, where we prayed for peace. More recently, representatives of the Catholic Church were present for the meeting at Mount Hiei. I believe that initiatives which are carried out in this spirit should be promoted and fostered, since we come to know each other better as we humbly tread the path of truth and universal love. I also wish to offer a cordial greeting to the Christian monks and nuns who have organized this meeting under the leadership of the Abbot Primate of the Benedictines. I am happy that a Commission for Interreligious Monastic Dialogue is carrying out this work in close contact with the Secretariat for non Christians. Your specific contribution to these initiatives consist not only in maintaining an explicit dialogue, but also in promoting a deep spiritual encounter, for your life is above all one devoted to silence, prayer, and a witness of community life. There is much you can do through *hospitality*. In opening your houses and your hearts, as you have done these days, you follow well the tradition of your spiritual father, Saint Benedict. To your brother monks coming from across the world and from a very different religious tradition you apply the beautiful chapter of the Rule concerning the reception of guests. In doing so you offer a setting wherein a meeting of mind and heart can take place, a meeting characterized by a shared sense of brotherhood in the one human family that opens the way of ever deeper spiritual dialogue. May all of you—partners in interreligious dialogue—be encouraged and sustained by the knowledge that your endeavours are supported by the Catholic Church and appreciated by her as significant for strengthening the bonds which unite all people who honestly search for the truth. God bless you all.

At this time my thoughts turn toward the people of the United States of America. Tomorrow morning, God willing, I shall leave Rome in order to begin my second pastoral visit to that country. It gives me great joy to undertake this visit during the celebration of the Bicentennial of the American Constitution. In anticipation of my arrival, I send cordial greetings to all the citizens of the United States. I look forward to expressing personally to them my sentiments of friendship for the whole nation. In particular I look forward to being with the Catholic community, so that we may celebrate together our unity in Jesus Christ and in his Church. I desire to pray with them, to listen to them, and to speak to them. My message will be the Gospel of Christ, the story of how "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him... may have eternal life". I also look forward to meeting many other Christian and non Christian brothers and sisters throughout America. To everyone I wish to proclaim the dignity of the human person, encouraging all to work together in building a world of human solidarity in justice, peace and love! May God bless all the people of America!

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