



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF AN INTERFAITH MEETING

Friday, 28 October 1988

Dear Friends,

It is a joy for me to greet you, the participants in the Muslim-Christian meeting, "Believers Walking and Working Together", which has been taking place at Assisi between 25-28 October, and I thank the Secretariat for having organized this colloquium. The fact that your meeting was so closely connected with the themes of mutual acceptance and collaboration on the path to peace, and your choice of Assisi as the site of your deliberations, gives special significance to your encounter as marking the Second Anniversary of the Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi.

My intention in inviting leaders from various world religions to come to that small town, far from any major metropolis, to pray for peace in the world, was that we be present in our common humanity before God, to ask him for the gift of peace and to arrive at a deeper appreciation of our responsibility as believers to build that peace, actively and concretely, among men and women.

At the time, I expressed the hope that the Day of Prayer in Assisi would be a new beginning, an inspiration for many more meetings of its kind. That you, Muslims and Christians, have heeded this call and have come to discuss ways of living and working together, shows that you share with me this hope and commitment.

You have come as Muslims and Christians who live together in the six countries of North Africa which border the Mediterranean: from Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt.

Does not the composition of your national groups – members of these two communities of faith in the one God, who have prepared this meeting together in your own countries, have travelled together, humbly, without publicity, have spent these days living together in Assisi, and are now

ready to return home with a common purpose – does not all this symbolize the hopes of all of us for the proper relationship between Muslims and Christians?

Three years ago, I had the great pleasure of visiting one of the countries from which you come, the Kingdom of Marocco. I was invited by His Majesty King Hassan II to address the youth of that beautiful country. One of the things I wanted to discuss with the young people was peace. At that time, I said to them: “You do not want either war or violence. You know the price that they cause innocent people to pay. Neither do you want the escalation of armaments. That does not mean that you wish to have peace at any price. Peace goes side by side with justice. You do not want anyone to be oppressed. You want peace in justice”.

Peace with justice. If Muslims and Christians, through their meeting, discussing, and working together, can show the world a path to this goal, we will surely be fulfilling the will of the God of peace. That is one of the most beautiful names by which you, my Muslim brothers, call upon Him and praise Him: Al-Salam, the Peace. For us Christians, it is Jesus who reveals to us the way to true peace: reconciliation with God our Maker, and reconciliation among all persons and groups in the human family.

Two years ago in Assisi, addressing the religious leaders who had come for the Day of Prayer, I said: “At Assisi we have all committed ourselves anew to making our specific contribution to the building of peace. Let us strive to live in the spirit of that solemn pledge. Let us spread this message among those who share our respective beliefs”.

Once again you have met in Assisi, in mutual respect and fraternal esteem. As you return now to your own countries, your task is to be, in the words of St. Francis of Assisi, “instruments of peace”. The challenge before you is to spread the message of peace, to practise peace in your homes and neighbourhoods and places of work, to make peace where there is none, to build understanding and peaceful collaboration between Muslims and Christians in your own countries. And the grace of the God of peace go with you!

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