



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE HMS MANCHESTER**

Saturday, 3 March 1990

Dear Friends,

It is my pleasure to welcome the *officers and men of the HMS Manchester*. I am pleased to have this opportunity to meet you and I would hope that your visit to Rome will help you to grow in your appreciation of the rich heritage of Christian faith reflected in many of her monuments and works of art. May it likewise lead you to think about the spiritual values which have served as the basis for so much of the history of the West. In our own days, this heritage has proved its enduring power as nations and peoples have found in it inspiration to affirm their desire for freedom, their belief in the dignity of each individual and their desire for a social order which ensures justice for everyone.

Amid the dramatic changes taking place in our world, you have a special part to play. As members of the armed forces, you serve your country in its efforts to promote security and safeguard freedom. The Second Vatican Council has taught that the proper fulfilment of this role makes a genuine contribution to the establishment of peace among nations (Cfr. *Lumen Gentium*, 79). Together with those who are working out new models of cooperation on the political and economic levels, you too are sharing in the work of building a more peaceful world.

The Christian faith teaches us that the peace which the world longs for is a gift of God and the result of obedience to his will. Any lasting peace, whether it be within our own hearts, in our families, or between nations, had God as its author and source. I pray that each of you will come to experience the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding (Cfr. *Phil.* 4, 7). And may people everywhere be blessed with renewed strength and perseverance as they strive to overcome conflict and injustice through dialogue, cooperation and generous concern for the rights and aspirations of their brothers and sisters.

Upon all of you and upon your loved ones I cordially invoke the abundant blessing of God our Father.

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