

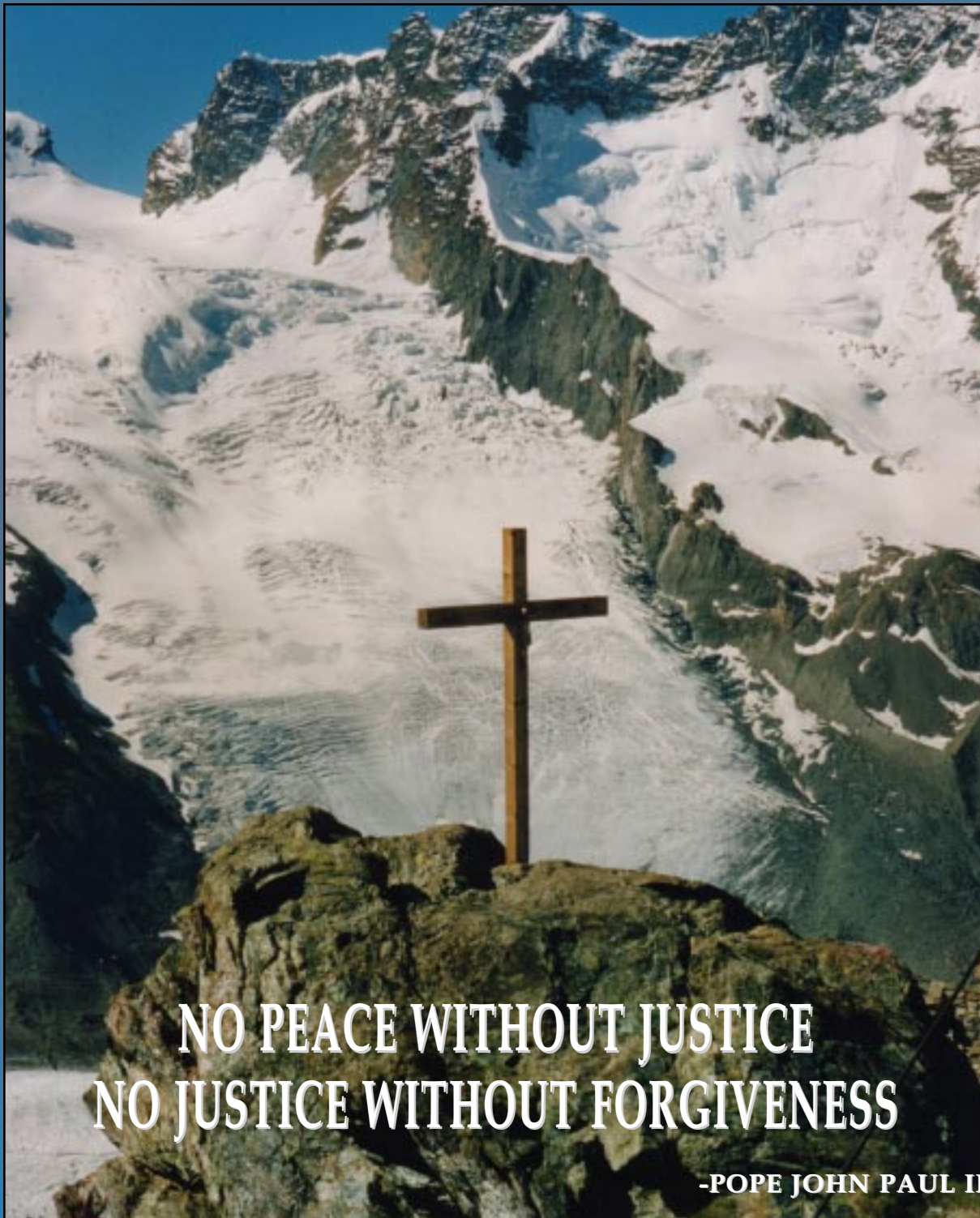
in a

Word

Pope John Paul II's
message for World Peace
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**NO PEACE WITHOUT JUSTICE
NO JUSTICE WITHOUT FORGIVENESS**

-POPE JOHN PAUL II

Photo by Father Pawlicki, SVD

No Peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness

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

The World Day of Peace this year is being celebrated in the shadow of the dramatic events of 11 September last. On that day, a terrible crime was committed: in a few brief hours thousands of innocent people of many ethnic backgrounds were slaughtered. Since then, people throughout the world have felt a profound personal vulnerability and a new fear for the future. Addressing this state of mind, the Church testifies to her hope, based on the conviction that evil, the *mysterium iniquitatis*, does not have the final word in human affairs.

PEACE: THE WORK OF JUSTICE AND LOVE

In the present circumstances, how can we speak of justice and forgiveness as the source and condition of peace? We can and we must, no matter how difficult this may be; a difficulty which often comes from thinking that justice and forgiveness are irreconcilable. But forgiveness is the opposite of resentment and revenge, not of justice. In fact, true peace is “the work of justice” (Is 32:17).

True peace therefore is the fruit of justice, that moral virtue and legal guarantee which ensures full respect for rights and responsibilities, and the just distribution of benefits and burdens. But because human justice is always fragile and imperfect, subject as it is to the limitations and egoism of individuals and groups, it must include and, as it were, be completed by the **forgiveness which heals and rebuilds troubled human relations from their foundations.** This is true in circumstances great and small, at the personal level or on a wider, even international scale. **Forgiveness is in no way opposed to justice, as if to forgive meant to overlook the need to right the wrong done. It is rather the fullness of justice, leading to that tranquillity of order which is much more than a fragile and temporary cessation of hostilities, involving as it does the deepest healing of the wounds which fester in human hearts.** Justice and forgiveness are both essential to such healing.

THE REALITY OF TERRORISM

It is precisely peace born of justice and forgiveness that is under assault today by international terrorism. When terrorist organizations use their own followers as weapons to be launched against defenseless and unsuspecting people they show clearly the death-wish that feeds them. Terrorism springs from hatred, and it generates isolation, mistrust and closure.

Violence is added to violence in a tragic sequence that exasperates successive generations, each one inheriting the hatred which divided those that went before. **Terrorism is built on contempt for human life.**

There exists therefore a right to defend oneself against terrorism, a right which, as always, must be exercised with respect for moral and legal limits in the choice of ends and means. The guilty must be correctly identified, since criminal culpability is always personal and cannot be extended to the nation, ethnic group or religion to which the terrorists may belong. International cooperation in the fight against terrorist activities must also include a courageous and resolute political, diplomatic and economic commitment to relieving situations of oppression and marginalization which facilitate the designs of terrorists. The recruitment of terrorists in fact is easier in situations where rights are trampled upon and injustices tolerated over a long period of time.

Still, it must be firmly stated that the injustices existing in the world can never be used to excuse acts of terrorism, and it should be noted that the victims of the radical breakdown of order which terrorism seeks to achieve include above all the countless millions of men and women who are least well-positioned to withstand a collapse of international solidarity—namely, the people of the developing world, who already live on a thin margin of survival and who would be most grievously affected by global economic and political chaos. **The terrorist claim to be acting on behalf of the poor is a patent falsehood.**

YOU SHALL NOT KILL IN GOD'S NAME!

Those who kill by acts of terrorism actually despair of humanity, of life, of the future. In their view, everything is to be hated and destroyed. Terrorists hold that the truth in which they believe or the suffering that they have undergone are so absolute that their reaction in destroying even innocent lives is justified. Terrorism is often the outcome of that fanatic fundamentalism which springs from the conviction that one's own vision of the truth must be forced upon everyone else. Instead, even when the truth has been reached—and this can happen only in a limited and imperfect way—it can never be imposed. Respect for a person's conscience, where the image of God himself is reflected (cf. Gen 1:26-27), means that we can only propose the truth to others, who are

then responsible for accepting it. **To try to impose on others by violent means what we consider to be the truth is an offense against human dignity, and ultimately an offense against God whose image that person bears.** For this reason, what is usually referred to as fundamentalism is an attitude radically opposed to belief in God. Terrorism exploits not just people, it exploits God: it ends by making him an idol to be used for one's own purposes.

Consequently, **no religious leader can condone terrorism, and much less preach it.** It is a profanation of religion to declare oneself a terrorist in the name of God, to do violence to others in his name. Terrorist violence is a contradiction of faith in God, the Creator of man, who cares for man and loves him. It is altogether contrary to faith in Christ the Lord, who taught his disciples to pray: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Mt 6:12).

THE NEED FOR FORGIVENESS

Why should we forgive? Returning to what I wrote in my Message for the 1997 World Day of Peace ("*Offer Forgiveness and Receive Peace*"), **I would reaffirm that forgiveness inhabits people's hearts before it becomes a social reality.** Only to the degree that an ethics and a culture of forgiveness prevail can we hope for a "politics" of forgiveness, expressed in society's attitudes and laws, so that through them justice takes on a more human character.

Forgiveness is above all a personal choice, a decision of the heart to go against the natural instinct to pay back evil with evil. The measure of such a decision is the love of God who draws us to himself in spite of our sin. But individuals are essentially social beings, situated within a pattern of relationships through which they express themselves in ways both good and bad. Consequently, society too is absolutely in need of forgiveness. Families, groups, societies, States and the international community itself need forgiveness in order to renew ties that have been sundered, go beyond sterile situations of mutual condemnation and overcome the temptation to discriminate against others without appeal. **The ability to forgive lies at the very basis of the idea of a future society marked by justice and solidarity.**

By contrast, the failure to forgive, especially when it serves to prolong conflict, is extremely costly in terms of human development. Resources are used for weapons rather than for development, peace and justice. What sufferings are inflicted on humanity because of the failure to reconcile! What delays in progress because of the failure to forgive! Peace is essential for development, but true peace is made possible only through forgiveness.

FORGIVENESS, THE HIGH ROAD

Forgiveness is not a proposal that can be immediately understood or easily accepted; in many ways it is a paradoxical message. **Forgiveness in fact always involves an apparent short-term loss for a real long-term gain. Violence is the exact opposite; opting as it does for an apparent short-term gain, it involves a real and permanent loss.** Forgiveness may seem like weakness, but it demands great spiritual strength and moral courage, both in granting it and in accepting it. It may seem in some way to diminish us, but in fact it leads us to a fuller and richer humanity, more radiant with the splendor of the Creator.

My ministry at the service of the Gospel obliges me, and at the same time gives me the strength, to insist upon the necessity of forgiveness. I do so again today in the hope of stirring serious and mature thinking on this theme, with a view to a far-reaching resurgence of the human spirit in individual hearts and in relations between the peoples of the world.

INTERRELIGIOUS COOPERATION

In this whole effort, religious leaders have a weighty responsibility. **The various Christian confessions, as well as the world's great religions, need to work together to eliminate the social and cultural causes of terrorism.** They can do this by teaching the greatness and dignity of the human person, and by spreading a clearer sense of the oneness of the human family. This is a specific area of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and cooperation, a pressing service which religion can offer to world peace.

No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness: this is what in this Message I wish to say to believers and unbelievers alike, to all men and women of good will who are concerned for the good of the human family and for its future.

No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness: this is what I wish to say to those responsible for the future of the human community, entreating them to be guided in their weighty and difficult decisions by the light of man's true good, always with a view to the common good.

No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness: I shall not tire of repeating this warning to those who, for one reason or another, nourish feelings of hatred, a desire for revenge or the will to destroy.

Editor's Note: Because of space considerations the Pope's message has been edited.

in a word or two

KEEPING THE FAITH: THE BLACK CATHOLIC CONGRESS MOVEMENT OF THE 20TH CENTURY

is available for purchase. As you prepare for Congress IX, sit back and enjoy this documentary on the Congresses of the 20th century! This video is a treasure you can add to your African American Catholic video library. Order yours today for \$25.00 per tape (includes postage, call for price on multiple orders). For a full listing of our video catalog, give us a call. Checks are payable to:

Media Production Center
199 Seminary Dr.
Bay St. Louis MS 39520
Ph: (228) 467-1097
Fax: (228) 466-5640
Email: video@inaword.com

The National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC) will sponsor its ninth Congress, August 29 - September 1, 2001 in Chicago, IL at the Hyatt Regency Chicago Hotel. The theme for Congress IX is "Black Catholic Leadership in the 21st Century: Solidarity Action."

For more information, call the Congress office at (410) 547-8496.

The Secretariat for Black Catholics and Solid Ground Ministry request your participation in the National Day of Prayer for the African American Family. It is their intention that on February 3, 2002 all would be united in prayer for the African American family. Now more than ever our families need prayer as they experience recession, terrorism, and now war. Many use the National Day of Prayer as their opening program to launch Black History Month Activities. The National Day of Prayer for the African American Family was created by Rev. James Goode, O.F.M. in 1989 "as a day .set aside for us to give special thanks to God for our families and to place our every care in the arms of Jesus." As a sign of support and solidarity, Beverly Carroll, Secretariat director, recommends each parish order a minimum of 200 brochures to be distributed to the African American Catholics in your parish or program. The cost of the brochures is \$25.00 plus s/h per 100. Fax order to:

Press Works
Attn: Nancy Hestand Fax: 415-777-1946

The Sisters of the Holy Family are sponsoring a tour of Brazil, Rio de Janeiro, the Amazon and Manaus June 12, 2002 for nine days. The tour includes visits to the Indian Museum, Opera House, Rio Negro Palace and the Municipal Market in

Manaus and a visit to the statue of Christ in Rio to name a few. For information write:
Sisters of the Holy Family Brazil Tour
2710 Gentilly Blvd
New Orleans, LA 70122

The 2001-02 Multi-Media Youth Arts Contest sponsored by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development's (CCHD) is underway. "*Breaking the Cycle of Poverty in America*" is the theme this year and relates to Catholic Social Teaching and CCHD mission.

Young people in Catholic parishes or schools can work individually or in a group to submit artwork within one of three media categories: visual arts, literature, or audio-visual. To request copies of the materials or for assistance in coordinating the contest, please contact Alicia Bondanella, CCHD Youth and Young Adult Coordinator, abondanella@usccb.org or call (202) 541-3151.

Catholic Campaign for Human Development holds yearly internships for youth and young adults. Its mission is to address the root causes of poverty in America through promotion and support of community-controlled, self-help organizations and through transformative education. An intern would be expected to work between 30-40 hours/week in the summer or 15-20 hours/week in the fall/spring. The internship does combine practical work experience with reading material and reflection. For more information, contact CCHD at (202) 541-3000.

Last year, Catholic pastors throughout the United States were invited to nominate high school seniors from their parishes for the Catholic University of America Parish Scholarship Program. Catholic University offered an annually renewable \$3,000 scholarship to every parish-nominated high school senior accepted for admission at the university. More than 800 students from parishes in 43 states were nominated. Catholic University is the only institution of higher learning in the United States created by the U.S. Catholic bishops and the university receives substantial annual support from Catholic parishes through a nationwide diocesan collection.

For more information on the scholarship programs at Catholic University, call 1(800) 673-2772 or visit www.admissions.cua.edu or contact, Victor Nakas or Chris Harrison at (202) 319-5600.

Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 5,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among blacks in the southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

IN A WORD is a publication of The Society of the Divine Word's Media Production Center.

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