



The Holy See

***LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II
TO ALL THE HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT
OF THE WORLD AND DECALOGUE OF ASSISI FOR PEACE****

To Their Excellencies Heads of State or Government

A month ago, the Day of Prayer for Peace in the world took place in Assisi. Today my thoughts turn spontaneously to those responsible for the social and political life of the countries that were represented there by the religious authorities of many nations.

The inspired reflections of these men and women, representatives of different religious confessions, their sincere desire to work for peace, and their common quest for the true progress of the whole human family, found a sublime and yet concrete form in the "Decalogue" proclaimed at the end of this exceptional day.

I have the honour of presenting to Your Excellency the text of this common agreement, convinced that these ten propositions can inspire the political and social action of your government.

I observed that those who took part in the Assisi Meeting were more than ever motivated by a common conviction: humanity must choose between love and hatred. All of them, feeling that they belong to one and the same human family, were able to express their aspiration through these ten points, convinced that if hatred destroys, love, on the contrary, builds up.

I hope that the spirit and commitment of Assisi will lead all people of goodwill to seek truth, justice, freedom and love, so that every human person may enjoy his inalienable rights and every people, peace. For her part, the Catholic Church, who trusts and hopes in "the God of love and peace" (II Cor 13,11), will continue to work for loyal dialogue, reciprocal forgiveness and mutual harmony to clear the way for people in this third millenium.

With gratitude to Your Excellency, for the attention you will be kind enough to give my Message, I take the present opportunity offered to assure you of my prayerful best wishes.

From the Vatican, 24 February 2002.

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Decalogue of Assisi for Peace

1. We commit ourselves to proclaiming our firm conviction that violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic spirit of religion, and, as we condemn every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or of religion, we commit ourselves to doing everything possible to eliminate the root causes of terrorism.
2. We commit ourselves to educating people to mutual respect and esteem, in order to help bring about a peaceful and fraternal coexistence between people of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions.
3. We commit ourselves to fostering the culture of dialogue, so that there will be an increase of understanding and mutual trust between individuals and among peoples, for these are the premise of authentic peace.
4. We commit ourselves to defending the right of everyone to live a decent life in accordance with their own cultural identity, and to form freely a family of his own.
5. We commit ourselves to frank and patient dialogue, refusing to consider our differences as an insurmountable barrier, but recognizing instead that to encounter the diversity of others can become an opportunity for greater reciprocal understanding.
6. We commit ourselves to forgiving one another for past and present errors and prejudices, and to supporting one another in a common effort both to overcome selfishness and arrogance, hatred and violence, and to learn from the past that peace without justice is no true peace.
7. We commit ourselves to taking the side of the poor and the helpless, to speaking out for those who have no voice and to working effectively to change these situations, out of the conviction that no one can be happy alone.
8. We commit ourselves to taking up the cry of those who refuse to be resigned to violence and evil, and we are desire to make every effort possible to offer the men and women of our time real hope for justice and peace.

9. We commit ourselves to encouraging all efforts to promote friendship between peoples, for we are convinced that, in the absence of solidarity and understanding between peoples, technological progress exposes the world to a growing risk of destruction and death.

10. We commit ourselves to urging leaders of nations to make every effort to create and consolidate, on the national and international levels, a world of solidarity and peace based on justice.

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