



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE DEMOCRATIC GROUP
OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT****

Thursday, 13 November 1980

I am happy to receive you during your days of study in Rome and to have this exchange of thoughts with you.

The theme of your studies is a great one: Europe and its harmonious development. As you know, the papacy was present at the birth of European civilisation and contributed to the formation of its spirit and institutions. The Catholic Church and Europe have travelled a long road together. Thus the Popes have long had, in keeping with their specific mission, an interest in the destiny of each European people and of Europe as a whole, and also in its institutions.

The European Parliament, in which you work and treat of important and delicate matters, is a focal point for the common effort to build Europe. If institutions are to be really alive, they must continually draw on the consciousness of individuals and peoples and express their consensus about the basic values of civilization. The long history of the continent, with its glories and its shadows, teaches us that we cannot build a Europe of well-ordered peaceful cooperation unless it is made to stand on a foundation of authentically human values laid in the minds of Europeans and consequently also in their laws and institutions. The laying of such a foundation presupposes consensus about the primacy of the human person and recognition, both in theory and in practice, of all the rights that belong to the human person as a transcendent subject.

Security and co-operation in Europe can rest only on this foundation. Security based on armaments has failed in the past to preserve the continent from fratricidal wars: there are no grounds for thinking that it will be any more successful in the future. The deceptive security of the balance of forces must be replaced by the more solid security of law, justice and freedom.

When we look at Europe today, we see promising signs of development and desire for renewal, but we cannot close our eyes to the forces at work that lead to paralysis and disunion. The decline in the rate of marriages and births, the many ways in which human life is attacked, the spread of drug abuse, the displays of self-centredness on the part of individuals, families and communities - all these appear to be symptoms of a destructive scepticism and a lack of confidence in life and the future.

This disease must be combated. It will be your part as leaders to breathe new life into the Europe of today by proposing and supporting initiatives for fostering human rights to their fullest extent and in all their applications, thus creating a climate favourable for the development of European co-operation.

It is my prayer that your work will make an important contribution to the achievement of this goal.

May God, who chose to create man in his own image, setting him over the whole world in all its wonder, guide your efforts and bless you.

**Insegnamenti* III, 2 pp. 1146-1148.

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