



# The Holy See

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## *ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE PILGRIMS FROM JAPAN*

*Monday, 4 March 1985*

*Dear Friends,*

This is indeed a particularly significant meeting. It is the continuation, as it were, of a centuries-old dialogue between your City and the Holy See. Your native City of Sendai in the Prefecture of Miyagi is celebrating the 350th Anniversary of the death of Lord Date Masamune, who founded the city in a part of Japan that is rightly proud of its great natural beauty.

In 1613, Lord Masamune sent his personal envoy, Hasekura Rokuemon Tsunenaga, to my Predecessor Pope Paul V. After a long and adventurous journey, Hasekura was received by Pope in 1615. The uniqueness of that event can only be measured against the background of those times. It was a meeting of two worlds that seemed to be so far apart.

Once again, almost fifty years ago, other representatives of Sendai came to Rome and met Pope Pius XI.

Now you have come to strengthen further the bonds between us. You young people, accompanied by members of your families and other citizens, and by the Bishop of Sendai, Bishop Sato, have come to Rome - in the footsteps of Hasekura - to meet the Pope. You have brought messages from the Mayor of Sendai, Mr. Ishii, and from the Governor of the Prefecture of Miyagi, Mr. Yamamoto. I thank you and I ask you to take them my greetings and the assurance of my esteem and prayers for all your fellow-citizens.

I am very happy to welcome you today to the Vatican and to have this opportunity to continue the dialogue that Lord Masamune sought to initiate.

Much has changed in the world since that time. Yet the need for openness and contact between peoples of different cultures and beliefs is as urgent now as it was then. When such contacts are fostered in mutual respect, we realize how widespread and sincere are the aspirations of all peoples to achieve a world of peace: peace that is not merely the absence of conflict but the practice of genuine justice at the service of the integral development of every human being and of all peoples.

When you return to Sendai your young friends and the citizens of your city may ask you: What did the Pope say? What message did he give you?

Tell them that it is a message of *hope in young people and of trust in the future*. Tell them that he believes that the future can be shaped by those who have the courage to choose good over evil, peace over violence, and brotherly love over every injustice. Tell them that he encourages them to work hard and wisely for a better world where understanding, justice, peace and love will be the heritage of every member of the human family.

For this I pray every day to Almighty God, our heavenly Father. And I know that you share this hope with me.

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