



The Holy See

**APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO INDIA ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
ON OCCASION OF THE VISIT TO THE FUNERARY MONUMENT
OF RAJ GHAT DEDICATED TO MAHATMA GANDHI**

Delhi (India)

Saturday, 1st February 1986

Dear Friends,

1. My visit to India is a pilgrimage of good will and peace, and the fulfilment of a desire to experience personally the very soul of your country.

It is entirely fitting that this pilgrimage should begin here, at Raj Ghat, dedicated to the memory of the illustrious Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation and "apostle of non-violence".

The figure of Mahatma Gandhi and the meaning of his life's work have penetrated the consciousness of humanity. In his famous words, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has expressed the conviction of the whole world: "The light that shone in this country was no ordinary light" .

Two days ago marked the thirty-eighth anniversary of his death. He who lived by non-violence appeared to be defeated by violence.

For a brief moment the light seemed to have gone out. Yet his teachings and the example of his life live on in the minds and hearts of millions of men and women. And so it was said: "The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere and I do not quite know what to tell you and how to say it... The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for these many years will illumine this country for many more years..." . Yes, the light is still shining, and the heritage of Mahatma Gandhi speaks to us still. And today as a pilgrim of peace I have come here to pay homage to Mahatma Gandhi, hero of humanity.

2. From this place, which is forever bound to the memory of this extraordinary man, I wish to express to the people of India and of the world my profound conviction that the peace and justice

of which contemporary society has such great need will be achieved only along the path which was at the core of his teaching: the supremacy of the spirit and Satyagraha, the "truthforce", which conquers without violence by the dynamism intrinsic to just action. .

The power of truth leads us to recognize with Mahatma Gandhi the dignity, equality and fraternal solidarity of all human beings, and it prompts us to reject every form of discrimination. It shows us once again the need for mutual understanding acceptance and collaboration between religious groups in the pluralist society of modern India and throughout the world.

3. The traditional problems of poverty, hunger and disease have not yet been eradicated from our world. Indeed, in some ways they are more virulent than ever. In addition, new sources

of tension and anxiety have emerged as well The existence of immense arsenals of weapons of mass destruction causes a grave and justified uneasiness in our minds. The inequality of development favours some and plunges others into inextricable dependence. In these conditions peace is fragile and injustice abounds.

From this place, which belongs in a sense to the history of the entire human family, I wish, however, to reaffirm the conviction that with the help of God the construction of a better world, in peace and justice, lies within the reach of human beings.

But the leaders of peoples, and all men and women of good will, must believe and act of the belief that the solution lies within the human heart: "from a new heart, peace is born"... Mahatma Gandhi reveals to us his own heart as he repeats today to those who listen: "The law of love governs the world... Truth triumphs over untruth. Love conquers hate..." .

4. In this place, as we meditate on the figure of this man so marked by his noble devotion to God and his respect for every living being, I wish also to recall those words of Jesus recorded in the Christian Scriptures – with which the Mahatma was very familiar and in which he found the confirmation of the deep thoughts of his heart:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" .

May these words, and other expressions in the sacred books of the great religious traditions present on the fruitful soil of India be a source of inspiration to all peoples, and to their leaders, in the search for justice among people and peace between all the nations of the world.

Mahatma Gandhi taught that if all men and women, whatever the differences between them, cling to the truth, with respect for the unique dignity of every human being, a new world order – a civilization of love – can be achieved. And today we hear him still pleading with the world: "Conquer hate by love, untruth by truth, violence by suffering" .

May God guide us and bless us as we strive to walk together, hand in hand, and build together a world of peace!

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