



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO A GROUP OF RELIGIOUS REPRESENTATIVES
FROM JAPAN PARTICIPATING IN
THE FIFTH INTERNATIONAL MEETING FOR PEACE**

Monday, 7 October 1991

My dear Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you as you journey to Malta to take part in the *Fifth International Meeting for Peace* organized by the Community of Sant'Egidio. Your desire to meet believers of all traditions in order to pray for peace in the world illustrates the conviction which we share that religion has a vital part to play in the building of more just and harmonious relations between individuals and peoples. I therefore wish to assure you of my interest in your work for peace and I am happy that we have this occasion to meet.

I recall with satisfaction that many religious leaders in Japan, including some of you who are here today, responded generously to my invitation to come to Assisi for the World Day of Prayer for Peace in October 1986. Since that date religious representatives from Japan have been present at the annual meetings which the Community of Sant'Egidio has organized to promote the spirit and aims of the Assisi Meeting. This year, which marks the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War in the Pacific, your delegation is even more numerous. Your country's tragic experience of the horrors of atomic war makes you particularly eloquent spokesmen of the world's vocation to peace.

Peace, the desire of every human heart, is essential to the well-being of the human family and indeed to its very survival. In recent times we have witnessed great progress in overcoming obstacles to world peace. And yet, as I said at Assisi, "peace is always extremely fragile. It is threatened in so many ways and with such unforeseeable consequences that we must endeavour to provide it with secure foundations" (John Paul II, *Address to the representatives of the Christian*

Churches and Ecclesial Communities gathered in Assisi for the World Day of Prayer, 3 [27 Oct. 1986]). We are aware that, in a sense, peace is beyond us. It is a gift to be implored. It is heartening that so many people around the world pray, individually and collectively, for this divine gift, for the success of efforts to promote true peace. The gathering of people from different religious backgrounds to pray in this manner takes on the added significance of a sign to the world that even profound differences of outlook and conviction need not be obstacles to mutual understanding, esteem and cooperation, which are the path to peace.

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