



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE INTERNATIONAL CINEMA CONFERENCE

Thursday, 2 December 1999

*Your Eminence,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen!*

1. With great joy I meet you today on the occasion of the International Study Conference dedicated to the theme, "*Cinema: images for a dialogue between peoples and a culture of peace in the third millennium*". I extend my cordial welcome to each of you, and through you to the whole world of cinema connected with your daily professional and artistic efforts.

I first greet and thank Cardinal Paul Poupard, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture, for the cordial words he addressed to me on your behalf, explaining the work accomplished by this symposium in continuity with the previous ones.

I also express my deep and sincere gratitude to the members of the two dicasteries: the Pontifical Council for Culture and the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, which, in fruitful collaboration with the Public Entertainment Board and *La Rivista del Cinematografo*, some years ago began a series of interesting initiatives, including the "*Tertio Millennio*" Festival of Spiritual Cinema. These programmes show the Church's interest in the seventh art and, at the same time, remind authors and artists of their important responsibilities.

2. The annual International Cinema Conference, being held for the third time this year, emphasizes the validity of this collaboration, which has proven very useful in the dialogue between culture and faith. The theme you have reflected on during these three days of intense study is very timely and represents the logical continuation of the conferences held in the last two years. You have met to discuss the cinema as an instrument of dialogue between peoples and as a vehicle for a culture of peace. If art, including that of the cinema, relates to life in a way that fully respects its values, it cannot fail to be a source of brotherhood, dialogue, understanding, solidarity and true, lasting peace.

Man, created in the image and likeness of God, is inherently called to peace and harmony with God, with others, with himself and with all creation. The cinema can become the interpreter of this natural propensity and be a place for reflection, for appeal to values, for invitation to dialogue and for communion. However, man in his complex and mysterious reality must become the reference-point for a quality cinema that offers culture and universal values. Man, the whole man, one and indivisible: a cinema that considers only some aspects of the amazing complexity of the human being inevitably ends up being simplistic and does not provide a useful cultural service.

3. I would now like to address you, cinema artists, to invite you to be ever more aware of your responsibility. Supported by the contribution of contemporary technology, and making use of the ever more stimulating knowledge about man, nature and the universe, you have before you immense areas where your creativity and genius can soar.

The cinema enjoys a wealth of languages, a multiplicity of styles and a variety of narrative forms that are truly great: from realism to fable, from history to science fiction, from adventure to tragedy, from comedy to news, from animated cartoon to documentary. It thus offers an incomparable storehouse of expressive means for portraying the various areas in which the human being finds himself and for interpreting his inescapable calling to the beautiful, the universal and the absolute.

The cinema can thus help to bring distant people together, to reconcile enemies, to promote a more respectful and fruitful dialogue between different cultures, by showing the way to a credible and lasting solidarity, the essential premise for a world of peace. We know how much man also needs peace to be a true artist, to create true cinema!

4. Our meeting on the threshold of the Jubilee Year offers me the opportunity to renew my hope that the cinema can also make its particular contribution, within the framework of this great and extraordinary event of faith and culture, to the promotion of a humanism linked to Gospel values, and which for this reason can create an authentic culture of man and for man.

To all involved in the cinema - producers, writers, screenwriters, directors, actors, technicians - and to those involved visibly or behind the scenes in this fascinating work at its various levels, I offer my fervent best wishes. I accompany these sentiments with a prayer to Mary, the faithful Virgin, who heard the voice of God and willingly received his mystery. May the Blessed Virgin grant you her motherly aid.

My Blessing to all.