



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF PAUL VI
TO THE STAFF AND MEMBERS
OF THE NATO DEFENSE COLLEGE***

Thursday, 3 February 1972

Gentlemen,

At the end of this thirty-ninth Session of NATO Defence College, your leaders, speaking for all of you, manifested this time also a desire for this meeting. We are very happy to accede to it. Beyond this, courteous step, we appreciate this gesture of attachment to the Successor of Peter in the Church of Jesus Christ, and we wish to see in it, too, a tribute to the role we endeavour to assume for the good of peoples, their safety and their happiness. We are happy to express to you, with our welcome and our sincere esteem for yourselves and your families, the sentiments that your institution inspires in us.

Personnel, military and who have come from the different horizons of Europe, Turkey and North America to acquire additional competence from a General Staff highly qualified in the strategic field, you are called tomorrow to exercise important functions within the Atlantic Alliance. How can we fail to invite you out to an increasing extent what must constitute, in our eyes, the twofold ideal of this Organization: solidarity among nations with a view to consolidating peace, and the defence of a civilization to which we are all rightly attached.

Even if this institution largely takes on the aspect of a military force which realism seems to impose, we think that Peace remains your real ideal, and that you are eager to do everything in your power to safeguard respect for the right of peoples, and their rightful aspirations to safety in freedom, to prevent new conflicts and new injustices, add let us say so frankly, to avoid recourse to arms. Is it not the general wish of mankind and its deep interest that purely military relations should be transformed more and more into civil relations and thus permit a harmonious development of all human values?

Already in the framework of your study Session we take pleasure in seeing a certain implementation of this international solidarity which we wish to see extended further and further. At it, in fact, you establish a multiple human relations between different peoples drawn together by the same concern for peace and civilization. You become aware of the values common to these peoples, based, on a conception of man and of civilization which must be defended and promoted, to the extent to which it is imbued with a spirituality, rooted in a really Christian tradition. Such a civilization, as you know, refuses to foster aggressive passions, and the aspirations of overweening prestige; it repudiates the thirst for domination; it avoids reducing man to an object used for materialistic purposes; it does not rely exclusively on relations of force to keep the balance between societies.

On the contrary, it aims at respect for the rights of the human person, while developing in the latter the spirit of service, a sense of the common good and of international solidarity; it is in search of a real peace that is prepared in the first place with justice, in accordance with the urgent appeal we made to all peoples at the beginning of this year. And who will be the supreme guarantor of this justice and this peace, if not God, who placed his likeness and his dignity in the hearts of men, and who calls them all to live as brothers, according to Christ's message of love which we wish to echo incessantly?

May the experience that you have lived here be a school in this noble ideal of human civilization, universal brotherhood and Christian peace! Expressing these wishes, we thank you for your visit and implore the Lord's Blessings on each of you; on your families, and on dear countries you represent.

*ORa n.7 p.2.