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PRESS RELEASE

Pope John Paul II says No to War

Pope John Paul II today urged world leaders to say "No to War", saying conflict was always a defeat for humanity and peaceful alternatives must be explored.

The Pope told a gathering of the diplomatic corps at the Vatican that the answer to avoiding war lay in observing international law, engaging in honest dialogue and diplomacy and rejecting the culture of death.

"Never as at the beginning of this millennium has humanity felt how precarious is the world which it has shaped," he said.

"I have been personally struck by the feeling of fear which often dwells in the hearts of our contemporaries.

"An insidious terrorism capable of striking at any time and anywhere; the unresolved problem of the Middle East, with the Holy Land and Iraq; the turmoil disrupting South America, particularly Argentina, Colombia and Venzuela; the conflicts preventing numerous African countries from focusing on their development," were all threatening humanity, he said.

"Yet everything can change. It depends on each of us.

"It also depends, quite obviously, on political leaders, who are called to serve the common good."

Leaders had to say "Yes to Life" and "No to Death", he said.

The Pope called for a renewed respect for law and said world leaders had to have the courage to say "No to War".

"The world would be totally different if people began to apply in a straightforward manner the agreements already signed," he said.

"War is not always inevitable. It is always a defeat for humanity.

"International law, honest dialogue, solidarity between States, the noble exercise of diplomacy: these are methods worthy of individuals and nations in resolving their differences."

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