Press Release

Pope John Paul II calls for Peace on Earth

Pope John Paul II has called on all people to renew their dedication to securing peace on earth under the guidance of truth, justice, love and freedom.

The Pope has used his message for World Day of Peace on January 1 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Pope John XXIII’s epic encyclical, Pacem in Terris, or Peace on Earth.

Pope John Paul's message, entitled Pacem in Terris: A Permanent Commitment, recalls that his predecessor believed peace was possible, despite the nuclear threat and divisions of the Cold War.

Pope John XXIII pointed to a new awareness of human dignity and inalienable human rights and looked with great hope to the United Nations as a credible instrument for maintaining and strengthening world peace.

"Not only is it clear that Pope John XXIII's vision of an effective international public authority at the service of human rights, freedom and peace has not yet been entirely achieved, but there is still in fact much hesitation in the international community about the obligation to respect and implement human rights," Pope John Paul II said.

"Perhaps nowhere today is there a more obvious need for the correct use of political authority than in the dramatic situation of the Middle East and the Holy Land."

The Pope said the volatility of the situation there was compounded by the clash of interests among the members of the international community.

"At the beginning of a new year in our human history, this is the hope that rises spontaneously from the depths of my heart: that in the spirit of every individual there may be a renewed dedication to the noble mission which Pacem in Terris proposed 40 years ago to all men and women of good will," he said.

"The task, which the Encyclical called "immense", is that "of establishing new relationships in human society, under the sway and guidance of truth, justice, love and freedom".

Ends

A full text of the Pope's World Day of Peace Message can be found at www.vatican.va.