

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

# **THE CHURCH AND RACISM: TOWARD A MORE FRATERNAL SOCIETY**

Original text (1988)  
Update (2001)

**CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD CONFERENCE  
AGAINST RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION,  
XENOPHOBIA AND RELATED INTOLERANCE**  
(Durban, 31 August - 7 September 2001)

*Introduction*

1. In 1988, only slightly more than ten years ago, the Holy Father requested that the then Pontifical Commission "Iustitia et Pax" publish a detailed document entitled *The Church and Racism: Towards a More Fraternal Society*. Since that time, the situation with regard to "Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance", the basic concerns of the next World Conference to be held in Durban, South Africa, from 31 August - 7 September, calls for further observations on the part of the Holy See. Therefore, on the occasion of this important Conference, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace decided to republish the document *The Church and Racism: Towards a More Fraternal Society*, with the addition of an introductory update.

***The increase of racism: between globalization and ethnic conflicts***

2. *Globalization*, which was already under way in 1988, is accelerating at an ever-greater pace; countries, economies, cultures and ways of life are drawing closer together and becoming more universal and intermingled. The phenomenon of interdependence is evident in every area: political, economic, financial, social and cultural. Scientific discoveries and the development of communications technology have "shrunk" the planet considerably. The globalization now emerging manifests itself in various ways; for example, the impact of a political, economic or financial incident occurring unexpectedly in one country is felt by other countries as well, and the great problems or questions of our time are global in scale (immigration, the environment, food resources, etc.).

3. Paradoxically, at the same time disagreements are growing sharper, *ethnic violence* is increasing, the quest for group, ethnic or national identity is becoming more relentless as the stranger and those who are different are rejected, to such a degree that at times barbarous acts are committed against them. Thus the last ten years have been marked by ethnic or nationalistic wars which give rise to growing unease about the future. This paradox is well known and is explained in part by fear of a loss of identity in a world becoming planetary too rapidly, at the very time when inequalities are also increasing. But the paradox actually has many causes. It is clear that the fall of the Berlin Wall aroused resentments and nationalism which had been kept under a tight lid for years, that borders inherited from colonial times had too often failed to respect history and the identity of peoples, or that, in societies where the social fabric is disintegrating, solidarity is cruelly lacking (cf. Part II of the document published by the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace *The Church and Racism: Towards a More Fraternal Society*, cited henceforth as *CR*).

4. Therefore, given these tensions, the situation since 1988 with regard to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance has regrettably not improved; indeed it has perhaps deteriorated, at a time when the movement of peoples has continued to increase and

the intermingling of cultures and multi-ethnicity have become "social facts". Hence the importance of the forthcoming World Conference on racism, an importance which the Holy See would like to emphasize.

It is right to rejoice at the end of the *apartheid* regime in South Africa, but the racist massacres or the "ethnic cleansing" of recent years, often in a context of general destruction, show to what extremes hatred and the will to dominate others can lead people. Other situations that gravely compromise the equal dignity of every human person continue to exist. For example, while the law may have abolished slavery virtually everywhere, the practice still persists, notably in Africa among people of different ethnic groups, or under new forms elsewhere, with the cruel exploitation of children, prostitutes or illegal immigrants. In addition, it is necessary to denounce the evil persistence of anti-Semitic prejudice, which was the cause of the Jewish Holocaust in the last century (cf. *CR*, Part II, n. 15). A century, it should be recalled, that began and ended with planned massacres in the name of race.

### ***The Catholic Church's unceasing appeal for a conversion of heart***

5. Murder, wickedness, envy, pride and folly have their source in the human heart (cf. Mk 7,21), and it is at this point that the contribution of the Catholic Church, in its constant appeal for personal conversion, is most important and necessary (cf. *CR*, Part IV, n. 24). We must look first to the human heart; it is the heart that must be continually purified so that it is no longer governed by fear or the spirit of domination, but by openness to others, by fraternity and solidarity (cf. *ibid.*). This is a fundamental role of religions. Christians in particular have the responsibility to offer a teaching that stresses the dignity of every human being and the unity of the human race (cf. *CR*, Part III). If war or other terrible circumstances make others the enemy, the first and most radical Christian commandment is to love that enemy and to respond to evil with good. Efforts in recent years to impose greater and more effective penalties for racist actions and claims, both within States and internationally, especially through the International Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, have not succeeded in changing attitudes. These penal measures are necessary and important in order to punish those responsible for certain acts and as a collective demonstration of fundamental values, without which a society cannot hold together.

### ***The Catholic Church's requests for pardon***

6. The Christian should never make racist claims or indulge in racist or discriminatory behaviour, but sadly that has not always been the case in practice nor has it been so in history. In this regard, Pope John Paul II wanted to mark the Jubilee of the Year 2000 by *requests for pardon* made in the name of the Church, so that the Church's memory might be purified from all "forms of counter-witness and scandal" (John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 33) which have taken place in the past millennium (cf. International Theological Commission, *Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past*. In its recent conclusions forwarded to the Holy See the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination [CERD] notes: "The Committee welcomes the solemn request of His Holiness for pardon for past acts and omissions of the Church which may have encouraged and/or perpetuated discrimination against particular groups of people around the world" [*Conclusions of the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: Holy See, 1 May 2001. CERD/C/304/Add. 89, 1 May 2001, n. 4*]). There are situations where the evil done survives the person who has done it, through the consequences of certain actions, and can become a burden weighing on the conscience and memory of later generations. A *purification of memory* then becomes necessary. "Purifying memory means eliminating from personal and

collective conscience all forms of resentment or violence left by the inheritance of the past, on the basis of a new and rigorous historical-theological judgement, which becomes the foundation for a renewed moral way of acting. This occurs whenever it becomes possible to attribute to past historical deeds a different quality, having a new and different effect on the present, in view of progress in reconciliation in truth, justice and charity among human beings and, in particular, between the Church and the different religious, cultural and civil communities with whom she is related" (cf. International Theological Commission, *Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past*).

7. In this context, during the Jubilee Year, a Solemn Mass was celebrated in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome on 12 March 2000, in the course of which special prayers confessing faults and requesting pardon were offered. Among the particular intentions, there were confessions for faults committed in relations with the people of Israel, as well as for actions contrary to love, peace, the rights of peoples, cultures and religions. After the confession of sins against the dignity of women and the unity of the human race, the Holy Father himself prayed in the following words: "Lord God, our Father, you created the human being, man and woman, in your image and likeness, and you willed the diversity of peoples within the unity of the human family. At times, however, the equality of your sons and daughters has not been acknowledged, and Christians have been guilty of attitudes of rejection and exclusion, consenting to acts of discrimination on the basis of racial and ethnic difference. Forgive us and grant us the grace to heal the wounds still present in your community on account of sin, so that we will all feel ourselves to be your sons and daughters" (*L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 22 March 2000, p. 4). Having already asked pardon of the peoples of Africa for the slave trade (cf. Address to Intellectuals and University Students, Yaoundé [13 August 1985], 7: *Insegnamenti* VIII, 2 [1985], 370; also *CR*, Part I, n. 4. Pope John Paul II took up this theme again on his visit to Senegal, when he visited the "House of Slaves" on the island of Gorée on 22 February 1992; cf. *Insegnamenti* XV, 1 [1992], 390), the Pope wanted to make "an act of expiation" and ask pardon of the American Indians and of Africans deported as slaves (cf. Message to Afro-Americans, Santo Domingo [13 October 1992], 2: *Insegnamenti* XV, 2 [1992], 358; Address at the General Audience [21 October 1992], 3: *Insegnamenti* XV, 2 [1992], 399).

### ***Pardon as the only path to national reconciliation***

8. The request for pardon concerns the life of the Church first of all. It is still legitimate however to "hope that political leaders and peoples, especially those involved in tragic conflicts, fuelled by hatred and the memory of often ancient wounds, will be guided by the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation exemplified by the Church and will make every effort to resolve their differences through open and honest dialogue" (John Paul II, Address to the participants in the International Symposium on the Inquisition [31 October 1998], 5: *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 11 November 1998, p. 3). In fact, in recent years, in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe or Asia, at the end of international, inter-ethnic or civil wars, or with the fall of military or communist dictatorships, legislation has been passed in order to seek the truth and identify those responsible.

These laws have sought to re-establish national peace by offering amnesty under certain conditions. Thus "truth and reconciliation commissions" (as in South Africa) were established. As non-judicial institutions, their mandate is to cast light upon these troubled periods and to identify the people responsible for them, without however condemning them to penal sanctions. Experience shows that such institutions cannot succeed on their own; beyond the laws of amnesty, countries that have been destroyed and divided by serious conflicts must

engage in a process of *reconciliation*.

Reconciliation has further demands: "No process of peace can ever begin unless an attitude of sincere forgiveness takes root in human hearts. When such forgiveness is lacking, wounds continue to fester, fuelling in the younger generation endless resentment, producing a desire for revenge and causing fresh destruction" (John Paul II, *Message for World Day of Peace 1997*, n. 1). The Church is aware of the difficulty, the "folly" of this forgiveness, but does not see it as either a sign of weakness or cowardliness. Quite the contrary. The Church proclaims the way of pardon because of her unshakeable confidence in the infinite forgiveness of God.

9. Given this fundamental premise, the Church proposes concrete means of reconciliation, which must be realized at every level. The weight of history, with its litany of resentments, fears, suspicions between families, ethnic groups or populations must first be overcome. "One cannot remain a prisoner of the past: individuals and peoples need a sort of "healing of memories" (*ibid.*, n. 3). This will require especially a correct re-reading of each other's history (at the level of education, culture...), resisting all hasty and partisan judgements, in order to acquire a better knowledge and therefore acceptance of others.

10. This reconciliation will only be possible if the various religions, governments and the international community sincerely and actively opt for a "culture of peace", so that there is no more resort to arms in order to solve problems and there is an end to the growth of the arms industry and the sale of arms, etc. (cf. *ibid.*, n. 4; See also the Holy Father's letter to the Bishops of El Salvador, *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 6 September 1982, 7). The local Churches have an active role to play, notably through their messages of forgiveness and reconciliation (see in particular the Lenten Message of the Catholic Bishops of Rwanda 1992; their Pastoral Letters for Advent 1993 and Lent 1993; their Christmas and New Year Messages to Christians in 1994 and 1995; documents published in the Holy See's Report to CERD, CERD/C/338/Add. 11 [26 May 2000], pp. 79-86), but even more through their action on the ground. It is the task of governments and world or regional organizations to put in place solid structures "capable of withstanding the uncertainties of politics, thus guaranteeing to everyone freedom and security in every circumstance". (*Message for World Day of Peace 1997*, n. 4). All forms of mediation therefore should be encouraged. Existing structures must also be strengthened. In particular, the United Nations, which has done much in the area of maintaining and restoring peace, should benefit from means better adapted to the new missions entrusted to it. Yet structures and processes will not be enough to build a lasting peace, only the path of forgiveness will make this possible.

11. As an act of gratuitous love, forgiveness has its own demands: the evil which has been done must be acknowledged and, as far as possible, corrected (cf. *ibid.*, n. 5). The primary demand is therefore respect for *truth*. Lying, untrustworthiness, corruption, and ideological or political manipulation make it impossible to restore peaceful social relations. Hence the importance of procedures which allow truth to be established. Such procedures are necessary but delicate, for the search for truth risks becoming a thirst for vengeance. Often as part of such a process governments grant "amnesty to those who have publicly admitted crimes committed during a period of turmoil.

Such an initiative can be judged favourably as an effort to promote good relations between groups previously opposed to one another" (*ibid.*). To the requirement of truth there must be added a second: *justice*. For "forgiveness neither eliminates or lessens the need for the reparation which justice requires, but seeks to reintegrate individuals and groups into society, and States into the community of Nations" (*ibid.*). Such justice must respect the fundamental

dignity of the human person at all times.

12. From the legal point of view, all persons (individual or corporate) have a right to equitable *reparation* if personally and directly they have suffered injury (material or moral). The duty to make reparation must be fulfilled in an appropriate way. As far as possible, reparation should erase all the consequences of the illicit action and restore things to the way they would most probably be if that action had not occurred. When such a restoration is not possible, reparation should be made through compensation (equivalent reparation). This is the most common form of reparation, but the calculation of the compensation is often difficult. When compensation does not suffice to make reparation for a moral injury, moral reparation can be made, that is satisfaction. An example of this is the offering of an apology or expression of regret to the victim State by the State responsible for the wrong.

The Holy See is aware of the great difficulty that this "need for reparation" can pose when it becomes a demand for compensation. It is not the Church's task to propose a technical solution to so complex a problem (in this context, one could mention the Message of the Twelfth Plenary Assembly of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar [SECAM], dated 7 October 2000: "Not only should the rich nations cancel debts, but they should also agree to compensation for both the debt and the wrongs they have done to Africa" [n. 18]). But the Holy See wishes to emphasize that the need for reparation reinforces the obligation of giving substantial help to developing countries, an obligation weighing chiefly on the more developed countries. This is not only a moral obligation; it is also a requirement resulting from the right of each people to development. As Pope John Paul II has insisted: "Both peoples and individuals must enjoy the fundamental equality ... which is the basis of the right of all to share in the process of full development" (Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 33).

### ***The fundamental role of education in the struggle against racism and discrimination***

13. The international community is aware that the roots of racism, discrimination and intolerance are found in prejudice and ignorance, which are first of all the fruits of sin, but also of faulty and inadequate *education* (cf. *CR*, Part IV, n. 28). To take a main theme of the Durban Conference, the role of education, understood as a "good practice to be promoted" in the struggle against these evils, is fundamental. In this regard too, the Catholic Church recalls her very extensive active role "on the ground", in educating and instructing young people of every confession and on every continent through many centuries. Faithful to her values, the Church educates at the service of every person and of the whole person (see for example, the address of Pope John Paul II to the President of Gabon, Libreville [17 February 1982], n. 5: *Insegnamenti*, V, 1 [1982], 569. See also the Holy See's Report to CERD, pp. 36-66. Detailed in the area of education, the Report gives many statistics and a series of very concrete examples of the Church's role in the field, notably in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Israel and the territories of the Palestinian Authority. In its Conclusions, CERD stresses positively this action of the Church: "The Committee expresses its appreciation for the role of the Catholic Church in promoting education, particularly in developing countries. The Committee further welcomes the opening up of Catholic schools to children from different religious creeds as well as the promotion of tolerance, peace and integration through education. The Committee notes with satisfaction that in many countries where the majority of the population is non-Christian, Catholic schools are places where children and young people of different faiths, cultures, social classes or ethnic backgrounds come into contact with each other" [n. 8]).

For, in the Church's view, "all people of whatever race, condition or age, in virtue of their

dignity as human persons have an inalienable right to education. This education should be suitable to the particular destiny of the individuals, ... and should be conducive to fraternal relations with other nations in order to promote true unity and peace in the world" (Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum educationis*, n. 1).

14. From the material point of view, the Church encourages efforts of international cooperation aimed at helping the poorer nations "in a better instruction of youth with a view to the future" (John Paul II, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps* [11 January 1986], n. 8: *Insegnamenti*, IX, 1 [1986], 69-70). For "the illiterate is a starved spirit" (Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum progressio* [26 March 1967], n. 35) and illiteracy is "a kind of daily slavery in a world that presupposes education" (John Paul II, *Message for World Day of Peace 1981*, n. 3; see also his Address to the Brazilian Bishops of the North-Eastern region on the occasion of their *ad limina* Visit [30 September 1985], 4: *Insegnamenti*, VIII, 2 [1985], 815-816). In another context, Pope John Paul II explained that the prime role of culture is to educate the person. The grave crises currently affecting the educational system in more affluent societies show that "the work of a human being's education is not carried out only with the help of institutions, with the help of organizational and material means, however excellent they may be", and that an education which places efficiency and performance before all else is doomed to failure. Education is a matter of teaching the human being to become "ever more human", to "be more" rather than to "have more". Thus the human being learns to "be" "with others", but even more to be "for others". That is why "education is of fundamental importance for the formation of inter-personal and social relations" (John Paul II, Address to UNESCO [2 June 1980], n. 11: *Insegnamenti* III, 1 [1980], 1644).

15. As part of the general education process, to counteract racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance associated with it, there must be a specific effort to present - especially to the young - certain major values such as the unity of the human race, the dignity of every human being, the solidarity which binds together all the members of the human family. Equally important is *an education in respect for human rights* and, in this regard, mention should be made of the initiative launched by the United Nations Decade for Education in Human Rights (1995-2004). In addition to students in schools or universities, certain professions are in special need of a theoretical and practical formation in the area of human rights (government officials, lawyers, judges and law enforcement officers, but also teachers, social workers and journalists) (see especially the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action [25 June 1993], I 33, II, nn. 68-69). This is not to deny that education in human rights is a slow and complex process, especially when the country concerned has been through years of conflict and everything has to be rebuilt: administration, electoral system, police force, educational system, etc.

If peace cannot be attained without respect for human rights (cf. John Paul II, *Message for World Day of Peace 1999*), by the same token without education in human rights, peace and respect for others are impossible: "without education in moral values, in the people and with their leaders or future leaders, every construction of peace remains fragile; it is even doomed to failure, whatever be the cleverness of diplomats or the forces displayed. It is the duty of politicians, educators, families, and those in charge of the media to contribute to this formation. And the Church is always ready to make her contribution" (John Paul II, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps* [12 January 1985], n. 7: *Insegnamenti* VIII, 1 [1985], 66).

***The role of the media in human rights education***

16. In order to promote the culture of human rights, everyone has the duty to educate for peace; but the *media* have an important role in this area (cf. John Paul II, *Message for World Day of Peace 2000*, n. 12). Given the prodigious and positive development of the means of social communication, the Church recalls that the responsibilities of the individuals using them have become still greater. In fact, serious risks are involved, not so much with regard to the techniques used as to the content of what is communicated. Those responsible for information must never forget their duties to society as a whole. The first of these concerns the common good, for "society has a right to information based on truth, freedom, justice and solidarity" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2494). In communicating information, therefore, the primary duty is truth (cf. *Communicationis Socialis Praepositi*, *Communication et progrès*, n. 34: AAS 63 [1971], 606); but a corollary of this is that the right to communicate the truth is not unconditional (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2488). This right must be guided by charity, because it is not an end in itself; the private life and reputation of people must be respected, as must the common good.

Moreover, public authorities have the important responsibility of guaranteeing this freedom within the framework of respect for the common good (On these points, cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication *Inter mirifica*, nn. 3-12). In particular, they should avoid letting serious prejudices enter society by the means of communication, and especially that they do not transmit racist and discriminatory messages, as sometimes happens, for example, through the Internet. In the world of today, the new information technologies have a great impact on the lives of individuals and peoples. This is a phenomenon which offers great possibilities, but which also has its dangers: "The fact that a few countries have a monopoly on these cultural 'industries' and distribute their products to an ever growing public in every corner of the earth can be a powerful factor in undermining cultural distinctness. These products include and transmit implicit value-systems, and can therefore lead to a kind of dispossession and loss of cultural identity in those who receive them" (John Paul II, *Message for World Day of Peace 2001*, n. 11).

### ***The role of religions and of the Catholic Church in particular in human rights education***

17. First and foremost, the Church insists on the irreplaceable role of religions, and of the Christian faith especially, in the area of education regarding human rights. At the Interreligious Assembly of 1999, Pope John Paul II declared: "The task before us ... is to promote a culture of dialogue. Individually and together, we must show that religious belief inspires peace, encourages solidarity, promotes justice and upholds liberty" (Address at the Closing Ceremony, Vatican City [28 October 1999]: *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition [3 November 1999], pp. 1-2. On interreligious dialogue, see the activities of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Holy See's Report to CERD, nn. 77 ff.). On another occasion, he stated to the German Bishops that "religious instruction ... can help to recognize clearly ... new emerging forms of idolatry ... such as nationalism and racism" (Address to a group of Bishops of Germany on the occasion of their *ad limina* Visit [4 December 1992], n. 7: *Insegnamenti* XV, 2 [1992], 812, quoted in the Report to CERD, n. 23). The Catholic Church in fact elaborates and teaches an important social doctrine focussing on the person and the person's rights at every stage of life and in every situation. The Church's moral teaching has two poles: the salvation of souls and respect for human dignity. In the year designated by the United Nations as the year of "dialogue between civilizations", it is good to remember that the basis of this dialogue is the existence of values common to all cultures. Pope John Paul II has written: "The different religions too can and ought to contribute decisively to this process. My many encounters with representatives of other religions - I recall especially the meeting in Assisi in 1986 and in Saint Peter's Square in 1999 - have made me



more confident that mutual openness between the followers of the various religions can greatly serve the cause of peace and the common good of the human family" (John Paul II, *Message for World Day of Peace 2001*, n. 16. See also the *Message for World Day of Peace 1992*: "Believers united in building peace").

### ***Positive discrimination as a means of counteracting racism and forms of discrimination***

18. Regarding "good practices to promote" and more especially what is called "positive discrimination" or "affirmative distinctions", it is well known that the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, of 21 December 1965, envisages in Article 1, 4 the possibility of adopting special measures "for the sole purpose of securing adequate advancement of certain racial or ethnic groups or individuals requiring such protection as may be necessary in order to ensure such groups or individuals equal enjoyment or exercise of human rights ... " (the Holy See ratified this Convention in 1969; see *CR*, Part IV, n. 30. See also the Holy See's Report to CERD, n. 4 k: "So far as the *International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination* is concerned, the Holy See takes special pleasure in reiterating its support of the Convention as the Catholic Church considers it its duty to preach the equal dignity of all human beings, created by God in His image"). On this basis of "affirmative action", various countries have adopted legislation providing special protection notably for indigenous peoples and minorities. These voluntary measures are intended to ensure effective recognition of the equality of all, for example by facilitating access to bank loans for a particular category of the population. There are different systems of applying such measures: the many more or less obligatory provisions for *affirmative action*, the system of quotas imposing a fixed percentage of one or other group of people (in public employment, schools, universities, elections ...), etc.

19. The choice of this kind of policy remains controversial. There is a real risk that such measures will crystallize differences rather than foster social cohesion, that in the area of employment or political life, for example, there will be recruitment or election of individuals on the basis of their ethnic group rather than their competence, and finally that freedom of choice will be compromised. Those who support these voluntary policies reply that it is not enough to recognize equality - it has to be created. And in fact it cannot be denied that the weight of historical, social and cultural precedents requires at times positive action by States.

The Catholic Church is always keen to defend the reality of the concrete person, situated in history (cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis* [4 March 1979], n. 13), and she calls for effective respect for human rights. These policies are legitimate to the extent that they respect the prudent reserve of Article 1, 4 of the 1965 Convention, which provides that these measures of positive discrimination must be temporary, that they ought not have the effect of maintaining different rights for different groups, and that they must not be kept in force once their objectives have been achieved.

### ***The increased mobility of peoples demands more than ever an openness to others***

20. The *movement of peoples*, as previously stated, has accelerated in recent years for various reasons, which are often dramatic (wars, forced displacement, natural disasters, etc.). As the number of foreigners grows, some people become alarmed and demand, for instance, "zero immigration" laws, or indulge in still more violent forms of behaviour (cf. *CR*, Part II, n. 14). The Catholic Church is aware of these problems (cf. *CR*, Part IV, n. 29), and has always paid special attention to refugees, migrants and expatriates. The Pope, for example, dedicates an annual message to migrants and refugees. On every occasion, he seeks to encourage everyone,

and especially Christians, to be generous in their welcome, particularly through positive actions such as family reunification, and to recognize that immigrants bring with them the riches of their culture, history and traditions (see among others the Holy Father's *Message for World Day of Migrants 1992* "To welcome the stranger with the joy of one who can recognize in him the face of Christ", *Insegnamenti*, XV, 2 [1992], 80-84. In its conclusions, CERD remarks: "The Committee notes with satisfaction that the laws and teachings of the Catholic Church promote tolerance, friendly co-existence and multiracial integration and that Pope John Paul II has, in a number of speeches, openly condemned all forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia manifested through racial tensions and conflicts around the world" [n. 4]. See also the activity of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerants, especially in the Holy See's Report to CERD, nn. 82 ff., see Note 16. In its conclusions CERD notes: "The Committee expresses its appreciation for the contributions made by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People through, inter alia, declarations and programmes of action to promote non-discrimination against refugees and migrants in various parts of the world. In this context, the Committee notes the efforts undertaken by the State party to promote the rights of the Roma populations" [n. 7]). The local Churches, especially through the Episcopal Conferences, have not hesitated to enter into public debate in order to condemn racism and foster openness to immigrants (see for example the Message of the French Episcopal Commission on Migration to immigrants in France, published at a time when the movement towards a policy of "zero immigration" was in full swing, *Nous avons besoin de vous* [20 May 1993]: *Documentation catholique* 2074 [1993], 569; the Message of the Japanese Bishops, *Seeking the Kingdom of God which transcends differences of nationality*, which addressed the increase of immigrants to Japan especially from poor countries and which encourages Christians to develop positive attitudes towards them. See also the documents published by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the U.S.A., such as *Who are my brothers and sisters? A Catholic educational guide for understanding and welcoming immigrants and refugees*, Washington, D. C., 1996, which is an educational programme for Catholic primary and secondary schools; and also *Welcoming the stranger among us: unity in diversity*, Washington, D. C., 2001).

### ***New and dramatic forms of discrimination***

21. Since 1988, two great global divides have grown deeper: the first is the ever more tragic phenomenon of poverty and social discrimination (cf. *CR*, Part II, n. 13), and the other, more recent and less widely condemned, concerns the unborn child (cf. *CR*, Part II, n. 16) as the subject of experimentation and technological intervention (through techniques of artificial procreation, the use of "superfluous embryos", so-called therapeutic cloning, etc.). Here there is a risk of a new form of racism, for the development of these techniques could lead to the creation of a "sub-category of human beings", destined basically for the convenience of certain others. This would be a new and terrible form of slavery. Regrettably, it cannot be denied that the temptation of eugenics is still latent, especially if powerful commercial interests exploit it. Governments and the scientific community must be very vigilant in this domain.

### ***Conclusion***

22. When he visited South Africa in 1995, Pope John Paul II stated that solidarity is "the only path forward, out of the complete moral bankruptcy of racial prejudice and ethnic animosity" (Homily at Germiston Racecourse, Johannesburg [17 September 1995], n. 4: *Insegnamenti* XVIII, 2 [1995], 581). Solidarity must be fostered among States, but also within every society where a process of de-humanization and the disintegration of the social fabric undeniably aggravates racist and xenophobic attitudes and behaviour. This negative

process results in rejection of the weakest, be it the foreigner, the handicapped or the homeless. Solidarity must be based upon the unity of the human family, because all people, created in the image and likeness of God, have the same origin and are called to the same destiny (cf. *CR*, Part III, nn. 19-20). On this basis the contribution of religion remains irreplaceable, a contribution made by each believer who, freely adhering to faith, lives it out every day. Freedom of conscience and freedom of religion remain the premise, the principle and the foundation of every other freedom, human and civil, individual and communal.

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# **THE CHURCH AND RACISM: TOWARD A MORE FRATERNAL SOCIETY**

## **Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace**

### **Original Text**

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#### Introduction

1. Racial prejudice or racist behavior continues to trouble relations between persons, human groups and nations. Public opinion is increasingly incensed by it. Moral conscience can by no means accept it. The Church is especially sensitive to this discriminatory attitude. The message which she has drawn from biblical Revelation strongly affirms the dignity of every person created in God's image, the unity of humankind in the Creator's plan, and the dynamics of the reconciliation worked by Christ the Redeemer who has broken down the dividing wall which kept opposing worlds apart<sup>(1)</sup> in order to recapitulate all persons in him.

For this reason, the Holy Father asked the Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace to help enlighten and awaken consciences about this major concern: namely, the reciprocal respect between ethnic and racial groups as well as their fraternal coexistence. Such a task presupposes a lucid analysis of complex situations of both past and present, as well as an unbiased judgment about moral shortcomings and positive initiatives, in the light of fundamental ethical principles and the Christian message. Christ denounced evil, even at the risk of his life. He did this not to condemn but to save. Likewise, the Holy See feels that it has the duty to denounce deplorable situations prophetically. In so doing, it is careful, however, not to condemn or exclude persons. It wants, rather, to help them find a way out of such situations through concrete and progressive efforts. It wishes, with all due realism, to reinforce the hope of renewal, which is always possible, and to propose suitable pastoral guidelines for Christians and all people of good will who seek the same objectives.

This document sets out to examine, in the first place, the phenomenon of racism in the strict sense. On occasion, however, it also treats some other manifestations of conflictual attitudes, intolerance and prejudice, insofar as these have a kinship with racism or contain racist elements. In the light of its principal focus, the document thus notes the bonds which exist between certain conflicts and racial prejudice.

#### I. Racist Behavior Throughout History

NOTE: No attempt is made here to trace a complete history of racism, nor of the attitude of the Church in this regard. Rather, some highlights of this history are indicated, emphasizing the consistency of the teaching of the Magisterium concerning the phenomenon of racism. This by no means implies an effort to gloss over the weakness and even, at times, the complicity of certain Church leaders, as well as of other members of the Church, in this phenomenon.

2. Racist ideologies and behavior are long-standing: they are rooted in the reality of sin from the very beginning of humanity, as we can see in the biblical accounts of Cain and Abel as well as in that of the Tower of Babel.

Historically, racial prejudice, in the strict sense of the word—that is, awareness of the biologically determined superiority of one's own race or ethnic group with respect to others—developed above all from the practice of colonization and slavery at the dawn of the modern era. In rapidly considering the history of earlier major civilizations in the West as in the East, in the North as in the South, one can already find unjust and discriminatory behavior, but one cannot in every case speak about racism as such. Greco-Roman antiquity, for example, does not seem to have known racial myths. If the Greeks were convinced of the cultural superiority of their civilization, they did not, by the same token, consider the so-called "barbarians" inferior because of innate biological reasons. Slavery doubtlessly kept many people in a deplorable situation. They were considered "things" at their masters' disposal. However, in the beginning, these were largely persons who belonged to groups conquered in war, and not persons who were despised because of their race.

The Hebrew people, as the Books of the Old Testament testify, were aware to a unique degree of God's love for them, manifested in the form of a gratuitous covenant with him. In this sense, since they were the object of a choice and a promise, the Hebrew people stood apart from others. The criterion of distinction, however, was God's plan of salvation unfolded in history. Israel was considered the Lord's very own among all peoples.<sup>(2)</sup> The place of other peoples in salvation history was not always clearly understood in the beginning, and these other peoples were at times even stigmatized in prophetic preaching to the degree that they remained attached to idolatry. They were not, however, the object of disparagement or of a divine curse because of their ethnic diversity. The criterion of distinction was religious, and a certain universalism was already foreseen.

According to the message of Christ, for which the people of the Old Covenant were to prepare humanity, salvation is offered to the whole of the human race, to every creature and to all nations.<sup>(3)</sup> The first Christians gladly accepted being considered as the people of a "third race," according to an expression of Tertullian.<sup>(4)</sup> This clearly was not to be understood in a racial sense, but rather in the spiritual sense. They considered themselves a new people in whom the first two races from a religious perspective, that is the Jews and the pagans, met, having been reconciled by Christ. The Christian Middle Ages also made distinctions among peoples on the basis of religious criteria; Christians, Jews and "infidels." It is for this reason that, within "Christendom," the Jews, considered the tenacious witnesses of a refusal to believe in Christ, were often the object of serious humiliations, accusations and proscriptions.

3. With the discovery of the New World, attitudes changed. The first great wave of European colonization was, in fact, accompanied by a massive destruction of pre-Colombian civilizations and a brutal enslavement of their peoples. If the great navigators of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were free from racial prejudices, the soldiers and traders did not have the same respect for others: they killed in order to take possession of the land, and reduced first the "Indians" and then the blacks to slavery in order to exploit their work.

At the same time, they began to develop a racist theory in order to justify their actions.

The popes did not delay in reacting. On June 2, 1537, the bull *Sublimis Deus* of Paul III denounced those who held that "the inhabitants of the West Indies and the southern continents...should be treated like irrational animals and used exclusively for our profit and our service" The Pope solemnly affirmed that: "In the desire to remedy the evil which has been caused, We hereby decide and declare that the said Indians, as well as any other peoples which Christianity will come to know in the future, must not be deprived of their freedom and their possessions-regardless of contrary allegations-even if they are not Christians and that, on the contrary, they must be left to enjoy their freedom and their possessions."(5) The directives of the Holy See were extremely clear even if, unhappily, their application soon met with difficulties. Later Urban VIII went so far as to excommunicate those who kept Indians as slaves.

For their part, theologians and missionaries had already come to the defense of the indigenous people. The resolute commitment on the side of the Indians of Bartolome de Las Casas, a soldier who became a priest, then a Dominican religious and bishop, was soon taken up by many other missionaries. It led the governments of Spain and Portugal to reject the theory of the human inferiority of the Indians, and to impose protective legislation from which, a century later, the black slaves brought from Africa would also benefit in a certain way. The work of Las Casas is one of the first contributions to the doctrine of universal human rights, based on the dignity of the person, regardless of his or her ethnic or religious affiliation. In the same way, the great Spanish theologians and jurists, Francisco de Vitoria and Francisco Suarez, pioneers of the rights of peoples, developed this same doctrine of the basic equality of all persons and of all peoples. However, the close dependency of the clergy of the New World on the patronage system meant that the Church was not always able to take the necessary pastoral decisions.

4. In the context of racial contempt-although the motive was primarily to obtain cheap labor-mention must be made of the slave trade of blacks from Africa, bought by the hundreds of thousands and brought to the Americas. Their capture and traveling conditions were such that many died, even before their departure or their arrival in the New World. There they were destined to the most menial tasks, to all intents and purposes as slaves. This trade began in 1562 and the slavery that resulted was to last nearly three centuries. Here once again, the popes and theologians, at the same time as numerous humanists, rose up against this practice. Leo XIII vigorously denounced it in his encyclical *In plurimis* of May 5, 1888, in which he congratulated Brazil for having abolished slavery. The publication of this present document coincides with the centenary of that memorable charter. John Paul II, in his speech to African intellectuals in Yaounde (August 13, 1985), did not hesitate to deplore the fact that persons belonging to Christian nations had contributed to the black slave trade.

5. Because of its constant concern for the deeper respect of indigenous peoples, the Apostolic See again and again insisted that a careful distinction be made between the work of evangelization and colonial imperialism, with which the former risked being confused. It is in this spirit that the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide was created in 1622. In 1659, that Congregation addressed an Instruction "to Apostolic Vicars departing for the Chinese Kingdoms of Tankin and Cochinchine" that clarified the Church's attitude toward these peoples to whom she then had the

possibility of announcing the Gospel.(6)

In places where missionaries were more closely dependent on political powers, it was more difficult for them to curb the colonists' attempt to dominate. At times, they even gave it encouragement on the basis of false interpretations of the Bible.(7)

6. In the eighteenth century, a veritable racist ideology, opposed to the teaching of the Church, was forged. It stood in contrast, moreover, with the commitment of some humanist philosophers who promoted the dignity and freedom of the black slaves, at that time the object of a shameless and widespread trade. This racist ideology believed it could find the justification for its prejudices in science. Apart from the difference in physical characteristics and skin color, it sought to deduce an essential difference, of a hereditary, biological nature, in order to affirm that the subjugated peoples belonged to intrinsically inferior "races" with regard to their mental, moral or social qualities. It was at the end of the eighteenth century that the word "race" was used for the first time to classify human beings biologically. In the following century, we can even find an interpretation of the history of civilizations in biological terms, as a contest between strong races and weak ones, with the latter being genetically inferior to the former. The decadence of the major civilizations was explained by their "degeneration"-i.e., the mixing of races which weakened the purity of blood.(8)

7. Such theses had considerable resonance in Germany. It is well known that the National-Socialist totalitarian party made a racist ideology the basis of its insane program, aimed at the physical elimination of those it deemed belonging to "inferior races." This party became responsible for one of the greatest genocides in history. This murderous folly struck first and foremost the Jewish people in unheard-of proportions, as well as other peoples, such as the Gypsies and the Tziganes, and also categories of persons such as the handicapped and the mentally ill. It was only a step from racism to eugenics, and it was quickly taken.

The Church did not hesitate to raise her voice.(9) Pope Pius XI clearly condemned Nazi doctrines in his encyclical, *Mit brennender Sorge*, stating in particular: "Whosoever takes race, or the people or the State...or any other basic value of the human community...in order to withdraw them from [their] scale of values...and deify them through an idolatrous cult, overturns and falsifies the order of things created and established by God."(10) On April 13, 1938, the pope had the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and Universities address a letter to all rectors and deans of faculties, asking all professors of theology to refute, using the method proper to each discipline, the scientific pseudo-truths with which Nazism justified its racist ideologies.(11) As early as 1937, Pius XI had begun to prepare another major encyclical on the unity of the human race which was to condemn racism and anti-Semitism. Death overtook him before he could make it public. His successor, Pope Pius XII, took certain elements from it for his first encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus*,(12) and especially from his 1942 Christmas message in which he stated that among the erroneous postulates of juridical positivisms "must be included a theory which claims for such and such a nation, race, class, the 'juridical instinct,' supreme imperative and norm without appeal." The pope launched a vibrant appeal for a new and better social order: "Humanity owes such a commitment to hundreds of thousands of persons who, without the slightest guilt on their part, but simply because they belong to a given race or nationality, are doomed to death or to gradual

extinction."(13) In Germany itself, there was a courageous resistance on the part of the Catholic Church to which Pope John Paul II referred on April 30, 1987(14) during his second visit to that country.

This insistence on the drama of Nazi racism should not make us forget other massive exterminations of populations, such as that of the Armenians right after World War I and, more recently, for ideological reasons, that of an important part of the Cambodian people.

The memory of such crimes must never be erased. The young generations and those yet to come must know to what extremes persons and society are capable of going when they yield to the power of scorn and hatred.

In Africa and Asia, there are societies in which there is still a sharp division of castes as well as social stratifications that are difficult to overcome. The phenomenon of slavery, once more or less universal in both time and space, has not unfortunately totally disappeared. Such negative signs-and many others could be enumerated-are not always rooted in racist philosophical conceptions in the strict sense but instead reveal the existence of a rather widespread and troubling tendency to use other human beings for one's own ends and, by that very fact, to consider them of lesser value and, as it were, of an inferior status.

## II. Forms of Racism Today

8. Today racism has not disappeared. There are even troubling new manifestations of it here and there in various forms, be they spontaneous, officially tolerated or institutionalized. In fact, if cases of segregation based on racial theories are the exception in today's world, the same cannot be said about phenomena of exclusion or aggressivity. The victims are certain groups of persons whose physical appearance or ethnic, cultural or religious characteristics are different from those of the dominant group, and are interpreted by the latter as being signs of an innate and definitive inferiority, thereby justifying all discriminatory practices in their regard. If, in fact, race defines a human group in terms of immutable and hereditary physical traits, racist prejudice, which dictates racist behavior, can be applied by extension, with equally negative effects, to all persons whose ethnic origin, language, religion or customs make them appear different.

9. The most obvious form of racism, in the strictest sense of the word, to be found today is institutionalized racism. This type is still sanctioned by the constitution and laws of a country. It is justified by an ideology of the superiority of persons from European stock over those of African or Indian origin "colored," which is, by some, supported by an erroneous interpretation of the Bible. This is the regime of apartheid or of "separate development." This regime in the Republic of South Africa has long been characterized by a radical segregation in vast areas of public life, between the black, colored, Indian and white peoples, with only the latter, although numerically a minority, holding political power and considering themselves masters of by far the greatest part of the territory. All South Africans are defined by a race to which they are officially assigned. Although some steps towards change have been taken in recent years, the black majority of the population remains excluded from effective representation in national government and enjoys citizenship in word only. Many are relegated to "homelands" which are hardly capable of being self-sustaining and are,



moreover, economically and politically dependent on the central power. The majority of Christian Churches of that country have denounced the segregationist policy. The international community(15) and the Holy See(16) have also made strong pronouncements in this regard.

South Africa is an extreme case of a vision of racial inequality. The prolongation of a state of repression, of which the majority of the population is victim, is less and less tolerated. Such a situation carries within it the seed of racist reflexes on the part of the oppressed, which would be as unacceptable as those of which they are victim today. For this reason, it is urgent that these prejudices be overcome in order to build the future on the principle of the equal dignity of every person. Experience has shown, moreover, that peaceful evolutions are possible in this regard. The entire South African community, as well as the international community, must make every effort to promote a concrete dialogue between the principal parties involved. It is important that the fear which causes so much inflexibility be banished. And it is just as important to avoid allowing internal conflicts to be exploited by others to the detriment of justice and peace.(17)

10. In some countries, forms of racial discrimination still persist with regard to aboriginal peoples. In many cases, these peoples are no more than the remaining vestiges of the original populations of the region, the survivors of veritable genocides carried out in the not too distant past by the invaders, or tolerated by the colonial powers. It is also not uncommon to find these aboriginal peoples marginalized with respect to the country's development.

In many cases, their situation is similar in fact, if not in law, to segregationist regimes, in that they are relegated to limited territories or subjected to statutes which the new occupants of the country have, in most cases, unilaterally granted to them. The right of the first occupants to land, and a social and political organization which would allow them to preserve their cultural identity while remaining open to others, must be guaranteed. With regard to indigenous peoples, often numerically small, justice demands that two opposing risks be avoided: on the one hand, that they be relegated to reservations as if they were to live there forever, trapped in their past; on the other hand, that they be forced to assimilate without any concern for their right to maintain their own identity. Solutions are indeed difficult, and history cannot be rewritten. However, forms of coexistence can be found which take into consideration the vulnerability of autochthonous groups and offer them the possibility of maintaining their own identity within the greater whole to which they belong with all due rights. The greater or lesser degree of their integration into the surrounding society must be made on the basis of a free choice.(18)

11. Other States still have varying traces of discriminatory legislation which limit to one degree or another the civil and religious rights of those belonging to religious minorities which are generally of different ethnic groups from those of the majority of the citizens. On the basis of such religious and ethnic criteria, even though they are granted hospitality, the members of these minorities cannot, if they request it, obtain citizenship in the country where they live and work. It also happens that conversion to the Christian faith brings about a loss of citizenship. These persons, at any rate, remain second-class citizens with regard, for instance, to higher education, to housing, to employment and especially to public and administrative services in local communities. In this context, mention must also be made of those situations

where a particular religious law, with its consequences for day-to-day living, is imposed on other communities within the same country, as, for example, the "sharia" in some predominantly Muslim States.

12. Some mention must also be made of ethnocentricity. This is a very widespread attitude whereby a people has a natural tendency to defend its identity by denigrating that of others to the point that, at least symbolically, it refuses to recognize their full human quality. This behavior undoubtedly responds to an instinctive need to protect the values, beliefs and customs of one's own community which seem threatened by those of other communities. However, it is easy to see to what extremes such a feeling can lead if it is not purified and relativized through a reciprocal openness, thanks to objective information and mutual exchanges. The rejection of differences can lead to that form of cultural annihilation which sociologists have called "ethnocide" and which does not tolerate the presence of others except to the extent that they allow themselves to be assimilated into the dominant culture.

Rarely do the political boundaries of a country coincide perfectly with those of peoples. Almost all States, whether of recent or ancient foundation, experience the problems of diverse minorities settled within their borders. When the rights of minorities are not respected, antagonisms can take on the aspect of ethnic conflicts and give rise to racist and tribal reflexes. The disappearance of colonial regimes or situations of racial discrimination has therefore not always meant the end of racism in States which have become independent in Africa and Asia. Within the artificial borders left behind by the colonial powers, cohabitation by ethnic groups with different traditions, languages, cultures and even religions, often runs up against obstacles of mutual hostilities that can be characterized as racist. Tribal oppositions at times endanger, if not peace, at least the pursuit of the common good of the society as a whole. They also create difficulties for the life of the Churches and the acceptance of pastors from other ethnic groups. Even when the constitutions of these countries formally affirm the equality of all citizens with regard to one another and before the law, it is not rare that some ethnic groups dominate others and refuse them the full enjoyment of their rights.(19) At times, such situations have, indeed, led to bloody conflicts which leave lasting impressions. Still again, at times, public authorities have not hesitated to utilize ethnic rivalries to distract people from internal problems, to the great detriment of the common good and of justice which they are called to serve.

It is important to mention some analogous situations, such as when, for complex reasons, entire populations are kept uprooted, as refugees from the country where they had legitimately settled. They are often homeless, and in any case without a country. There are other peoples who, although living in their own land, are subjected to humiliating conditions.(20)

13. It is not an exaggeration to say that within a given country or ethnic group forms of social racism can exist. For example, great masses of poor peasants can be treated without any regard for their dignity and their rights, be driven from their lands, exploited and kept in a situation of economic and social inferiority by all-powerful land owners who benefit from the indifference or active complicity of the authorities. These are new forms of slavery which are frequent in the Third World. There is no great difference between those who consider others their inferiors

because of their race, and those who treat their fellow citizens as inferiors by exploiting them as a work force. In such situations, the universal principles of social justice must be applied effectively. Among other things, this would also prevent the over-privileged classes from sinking to actual "racist" feelings toward their own fellow citizens and finding in them a further alibi for maintaining unjust structures.

14. The phenomenon of spontaneous racism is still more widespread, especially in countries with high rates of immigration. This can be observed among the inhabitants of these countries with regard to foreigners, especially when the latter differ in their ethnic origin or religion. The prejudices which these immigrants frequently encounter risk setting into motion reactions which can find their first manifestation in an exaggerated nationalism-which goes beyond legitimate pride in one's own country or even superficial chauvinism. Such reactions can subsequently degenerate into xenophobia or even racial hatred. These reprehensible attitudes have their origin in the irrational fear which the presence of others and confrontation with differences can often provoke. Such attitudes have as their goal, whether acknowledged or not, to deny the other the right to be what he or she is and, in any case, to be "in our country." Of course, there can be problems of maintaining a balance between peoples, cultural identity and security. These problems, however, must be solved with respect for others and confidence in the enrichment that comes from human diversity. Some large countries of the New World have found increased vitality in the melting-pot of cultures. On the other hand, the ostracism and the harassment of which refugees and immigrants are too often the object are deplorable. The result is that they are forced to cling to one another, and to live, so to speak, in a ghetto which slows down their integration into the society which has received them administratively but which has not welcomed them in a fully human way.

15. Among the manifestations of systematic racial distrust, specific mention must once again be made of anti-Semitism. If anti-Semitism has been the most tragic form that racist ideology has assumed in our century, with the horrors of the Jewish "holocaust,"(21) It has unfortunately not yet entirely disappeared. As if some had nothing to learn from the crimes of the past, certain organizations, with branches in many countries, keep alive the anti-Semite racist myth, with the support of networks of publications. Terrorist acts which have Jewish persons or symbols as their target have multiplied in recent years and show the radicalism of such groups. Anti-Zionism- which is not of the same order, since it questions the State of Israel and its policies-serves at times as a screen for anti-Semitism, feeding on it and leading to it. Furthermore, some countries impose undue harassments and restrictions on the free emigration of Jews.

16. There is widespread fear that new and as yet unknown forms of racism might appear. This at times is expressed concerning the use that could be made of "techniques of artificial procreation" through in vitro fertilization and the possibilities of genetic manipulation. Although such fears are still in part hypothetical, they nonetheless draw the attention of humanity to the new and disquieting dimension of man's power over man and thus to the urgent need for corresponding ethical principles. It is important that laws determine as soon as

possible the limits which must not be surpassed, so that such "techniques" will not fall into the hands of abusive and irresponsible powers who might seek to "produce" human beings selected according to racial criteria or any other characteristic. This would give rise to a resurgence of the deadly myth of eugenic racism, the misdeeds of which the world has already experienced."(22) A similar abuse would be to prevent the birth of human beings of one or another social or ethnic category through abortion and sterilization campaigns. Wherever the absolute respect for life and its transmission according to the Creator's intentions disappears, it is to be feared that all moral restraint on a person's power will also disappear, including the power to fashion humanity in the derisive image of these apprentice sorcerers. In order firmly to reject such actions and eradicate racist behavior of all sorts from our societies as well as the mentalities that lead to it, we must hold strongly to convictions about the dignity of every human person and the unity of the human family. Morality flows from these convictions. Laws can contribute to protecting the basic application of this morality, but they are not enough to change the human heart. The moment has come to listen to the message of the Church which gives body to and lays the foundation for such convictions.

### III. The Dignity of Every Race and the Unity of Humankind: The Christian Vision

17. The Christian doctrine about the human person has developed from and is enlightened by biblical Revelation, as well as from a continuous confrontation with the aspirations and experiences of peoples. This doctrine has inspired the Church's attitudes, as we have already mentioned, throughout history. It has been clearly taken up and synthesized for our time by the Second Vatican Council in several key texts. The following passage is an example of this: "All men are endowed with a rational soul and are created in God's image; they have the same nature and origin and, being redeemed by Christ, they enjoy the same divine calling and destiny; there is here a basic equality between all men and it must be given ever greater recognition.

"Undoubtedly not all men are alike as regards physical capacity and intellectual and moral powers. But forms of social or cultural discrimination in basic personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language or religion, must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design."(23)

This doctrine has frequently been repeated by the popes and bishops. For example, Paul VI specified when speaking to the Diplomatic Corps: "For those who believe in God, all human beings, even the least privileged, are sons of the universal Father who created them in his image and guides their destinies with thoughtful love. The fatherhood of God means brotherhood among men: this is a strong point of Christian universalism, a common point, too, with other great religions and an axiom of the highest human wisdom of all times, that which involves the promotion of man's dignity."(24)

John Paul II in turn reaffirmed: "Man's creation by God 'in his own image' confers upon every human person an eminent dignity; it also postulates the fundamental equality of all human beings. For the Church, this equality, which is rooted in man's being, acquires the dimension of an altogether special brotherhood through the Incarnation of the Son of God.... In the Redemption effected by Jesus Christ the Church sees a further basis of the rights and duties of the human person. Hence

every form of discrimination based on race...is absolutely unacceptable."(25)

18. This principle of the equal dignity of all persons, of whatever race, already finds solid support in the sciences and a firm basis in philosophy, ethics and religions in general. The Christian faith respects this intuition, this affirmation, and rejoices in it. It represents a considerable convergence among the various disciplines which reinforces the convictions of the majority of people of good will and allows the drawing up of universal declarations, conventions and international agreements for the protection of human rights, and the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination. It is in this sense that Paul VI spoke about "an axiom of the highest human wisdom of all times."

Nevertheless, these approaches are not all of the same order and their respective levels must be respected.

The sciences, on their part, contribute to dispelling much of the false evidence used to justify racist behavior or to delay necessary changes. According to a declaration prepared at UNESCO on June 8, 1951, by a group of prominent scientists: "Experts generally recognize that all human persons living today belong to the same species, homo sapiens, and that they descended from one same stock."(26) But the sciences are not sufficient to substantiate anti-racist convictions. Because of their methods, they do not allow themselves to say the last word about the human person and his or her destiny, and to define universal moral rules of a binding nature for consciences. Philosophy, ethics and the major religions are interested in the origin, nature and destiny of human beings on a level that escapes scientific research left to its own means. They seek to base unconditional respect for all human life on a more decisive level than the observing of customs and the consensus of an age, which is always fragile and ambiguous. They can therefore, in the best of cases, adopt a universalism which Christian doctrine bases solidly on Revelation received from God.

19. According to biblical Revelation, God created the human being-man and woman-in his image and likeness.(27) This bond between the human person and the Creator provides the basis of his or her dignity and fundamental inalienable rights of which God is the guarantor. To these personal rights obviously correspond duties toward others. Neither the individual nor society, the State nor any human institution can reduce a person, or a group of persons, to the status of an object.

The belief that God is at the origin of humankind transcends, unifies and gives meaning to all the partial observations that science can amass about the process of evolution and the development of societies. It is the most radical affirmation of the equal dignity of all persons in God. With this concept, a person eludes all those manipulations of human powers and of ideological propaganda which seek to justify the servitude of the weakest. Faith in the one God, Creator and Redeemer of all humankind made in his image and likeness, constitutes the absolute and unescapable negation of any racist ideologies. It is still necessary to draw out all the consequences of this: "We cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people in other than brotherly fashion, for all men are created in God's image."(28)

20. Revelation, indeed, insists just as much on the unity of the human family: all persons created in God have the same origin. Whatever throughout history may have

been their dispersion or the accentuation of their differences, they are destined to form one sole family according to God's plan established "in the beginning." In the first man, the unity of all humankind, present and future, is typologically affirmed. Adam-from adama, the earth-is a collective singular It is the human species which is the "image of God." Eve, the first woman, is called "the mother of all those who live,"(29) and from the first couple "the human race was born,"(30) and everyone is of the "family of Adam."(31) As St. Paul told the Athenians: "From one single stock he...created the whole human race so that they could occupy the entire earth," and so everyone can say with the poet that they are of God's same "race."(32)

The choice of the Jewish people does not contradict this universalism. It was a divine pedagogy which wanted to assure the preservation and development of faith in the Eternal, who is unique, thus giving a basis to the ensuing responsibilities. If the people of Israel were aware of a special bond with God, they also affirmed that there was a Covenant of the entire human race with him(33) and that, also in the Covenant made with them, all peoples are called to salvation: "All the tribes of the earth shall bless themselves by you," God told Abraham.(34)

21. The New Testament reinforces this revelation of the dignity of all persons, their basic unity and their duty of fraternity, since all are equally saved and gathered together by Christ.

The mystery of the Incarnation shows in what esteem God held human nature since, in his Son, he wanted to unite it to his own nature without any confusion or separation. In a certain way, Christ has united himself with each person.(35) Christ is, in a unique way, "the image of the invisible God."(36) He alone perfectly manifests God's being in the humble human condition which he freely assumed.(37) This is why he is the "new Adam," the prototype of a new humanity, "the eldest of many brothers"(38) in whom the divine likeness disfigured by sin is restored. By becoming flesh among us, the eternal Word of God "humbled himself to share in our humanity,"(39) in order to make us share in his divinity. The work of salvation carried out by God in Christ is universal. It is no longer destined only for the chosen people. It is the whole "race of Adam" which is involved and which is "recapitulated" in Christ, according to the expression of St. Irenaeus.(40) With Christ, all are called to enter through faith into the definitive Covenant with God,(41) over and above circumcision, the Law of Moses and race.

This Covenant is fulfilled and sealed through the sacrifice of Christ, who obtained the Redemption of a sinful humanity. Through Christ's cross was abolished the religious division-which had hardened into ethnic division-between the peoples of the promise that was already fulfilled and the rest of humanity. The pagans who were until that time "excluded from membership of Israel, aliens with no part in the covenants with their Promise..., have been brought very close, by the blood of Christ."(42) It is he who had "made the two into one and broken down the barrier which used to keep them apart, actually destroying in his own person the hostility...."(43) Out of the Jew and the pagan, Christ wanted "to create one single New Man in himself." This New Man is the collective name of humanity redeemed by him, with all the diversity of its components, reconciled with God in a single Body which is the Church, through the Cross which killed hostility.(44) In this way, now "...there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, between the circumcised or the uncircumcised, or between barbarian and Scythian, slave and free man. There is only Christ: he is everything and he is in everything."(45) Therefore, the believer, whatever his previous condition may have been, has put on the New Man who is

constantly renewed in the image of his Creator. And Christ gathers together in unity the scattered children of God.(46) Christ's message envisages not only a spiritual fraternity. It presupposes and entails very important concrete behavior in daily life. Christ himself gave the example. The narrow context of Palestine where nearly all his earthly life took place did not give him many opportunities to meet people from another race. However, he accepted all the categories of persons with whom he came into contact. He did not hesitate to spend time with the Samaritans(47) and to refer to them as an example,(48) although they were despised by the Jews, who treated them as heretics. He made all who were marginalized in one way or another benefit from his salvation: the sick, sinners-men and women, prostitutes, publicans, pagans such as the Syro-phoenician woman.(49) Only those were left aside who excluded themselves because of their own self- sufficiency, such as certain Pharisees. And he warned us solemnly: we will be judged on the attitude we have toward the stranger or the least of his brothers; for, without our even knowing it, it is Christ himself whom we meet in them.(50)

Christ's resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost ushered in this new humanity. Incorporation into this new humanity comes through faith and Baptism, following the preaching of and free adherence to the Gospel. This Good News is meant for all races. "Make disciples of all nations."(51)

22. The Church has therefore the vocation in the midst of the world to be the people redeemed and reconciled with God and among themselves, forming "one body, one spirit in Christ,"(52) and giving witness before all to respect and love. "Every nation under heaven" was symbolically represented in Jerusalem at Pentecost,(53) the antitype and victory over the dispersion of Babel.(54) As Peter said, when he was called to the house of the pagan, Cornelius, "God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.... God shows no partiality...."(55) The Church has the sublime vocation of realizing, first of all within herself, the unity of humankind over and above any ethnic, cultural, national, social or other divisions in order to signify precisely that such divisions are now obsolete, having been abolished by the cross of Christ. In doing this, the Church contributes toward promoting the fraternal coexistence of all peoples. The Second Vatican Council has rightly defined the Church as "sacrament, a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men"(56) since "both Christ and the Church. . .transcend the distinctions of race and nationality."(57) Within the Church "no inequality arising from race or nationality, social condition or sex" should exist.(58) This is indeed the meaning of the word "Catholic"-i.e., universal, which is one of the marks of the Church. As the Church spreads, this catholicity becomes more manifest. The Church actually gathers together Christ's faithful from all the nations of the world, from the most diverse cultures, who are led by pastors from their own peoples, all sharing the same faith and the same charity.

The repeated failures due to people's insensibility and the sins of her own members can in no way weaken what the Church has the vocation and mission to accomplish by divine mandate. They confirm rather that it is not a human undertaking but a plan that surpasses merely human forces. In any case, it is important that Christians become more aware that they are all called to be a sign in the world. Should they banish all forms of racial, ethnic, national or cultural discrimination from their conduct, the world would recognize better the newness of the Gospel of reconciliation in the Church, they must anticipate the eschatological and definitive

community of the Kingdom of God.

23. The Christian teaching, which has just been presented, has in fact serious moral consequences which can be summarized in three key words: respect for differences, fraternity, solidarity.

If people and human communities are all equal in dignity, that does not mean that they all have, at a given moment, equal physical abilities, cultural endowments, intellectual and moral strengths, or that they are at the same stage of development. Equality does not mean uniformity. It is important to recognize the diversity and complementarity of one another's cultural riches and moral qualities. Equality of treatment therefore implies a certain recognition of differences which minorities themselves demand in order to develop according to their own specific characteristics, in respect for others and for the common good of society and the world community. No human group, however, can boast of having a natural superiority over others,(59) or of exercising any discrimination that affects the basic rights of the person.

Mutual respect is not enough: fraternity must be established. The dynamism necessary for such fraternity is none other than charity, which is also very much at the heart of the Christian message: "Every man is my brother."(60) Charity is not just a simple feeling of benevolence or pity. It aims at enabling each and every one to benefit effectively from worthy conditions of life due in justice: for survival, freedom and development in all circumstances. It makes a person see him or herself, in Christ, in every other man and woman, according to the divine precept "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Recognition of fraternity is not enough. One must go on to effective solidarity between all, in particular between rich and poor. Pope John Paul II's recent encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (December 30, 1987), insists on interdependence "sensed as a system determining relationships in the contemporary world...and accepted as a moral category. When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a 'virtue,' is solidarity."(61) Peace among people and nations is at stake: "Opus solidaritatis pax, peace is the fruit of solidarity."(62)

#### IV. Contribution of Christians, in Union with Others, to Promoting Fraternity and Solidarity Among Races

24. Racial prejudice, which denies the equal dignity of all the members of the human family and blasphemes the Creator, can only be eradicated by going to its roots, where it is formed: in the human heart. It is from the heart that just or unjust behavior is born,(63) according to whether persons are open to God's will-in the natural order and in the Living Word-or whether they close themselves up in those egoisms dictated by fear or the instinct of domination. It is the way we look at others that must be purified. Harboring racist thoughts and entertaining racist attitudes is a sin against the specific message of Christ for whom one's "neighbor" is not only a person from my tribe, my milieu, my religion or my nation: it is every person that I meet along the way.

It is not through external means-legislation or scientific proofs-that racial prejudice can be uprooted. It is indeed not enough that laws prohibit or punish all types of



racial discrimination: these laws can easily be gotten around if the community for which they are intended does not fully accept them. To overcome discrimination, a community must interiorize the values that inspire just laws and live out, in day-to-day life, the conviction of the equal dignity of all.

25. A change of heart cannot occur without strengthening spiritual convictions regarding respect for other races and ethnic groups. The Church, on its part, contributes to forming consciences by clearly presenting the entire Christian doctrine on this subject. She particularly asks pastors, preachers, teachers and catechists to explain the true teaching of Scripture and Tradition about the origin of all people in God, their final common destiny in the Kingdom of God, the value of the precept of fraternal love, and the total incompatibility between racist exclusivism and the universal calling of all to the same salvation in Jesus Christ. Recourse to the Bible to justify a posteriori any racist prejudice must be firmly denounced. The Church has never authorized any such deformed interpretation of Scripture. The Church's persuasive task is equally carried out through the witness of life of Christians: respect for foreigners, acceptance of dialogue, sharing, mutual aid and collaboration with other ethnic groups. The world needs to see this parable in action among Christians in order to be convinced by Christ's message. Of course, Christians themselves must humbly admit that members of the Church, on all levels, have not always coherently lived out this teaching throughout history. Nonetheless, they must continue to proclaim what is right while seeking to "do" the truth.(64)

26. Doctrine and examples by themselves are not sufficient. The victims of racism, wherever they may be, must be defended. Acts of discrimination among persons and peoples for racist or other reasons-religious or ideological-and which lead to contempt and to the phenomena of exclusion, must be denounced and brought to light without hesitation and strongly rejected in order to promote equitable behavior, legislative dispositions and social structures.

An increasing number of people have become more sensitive to this injustice and are opposing all forms of racism. They may be doing so out of religious conviction or for humanitarian reasons. This inspires them at times to stand up against repression by certain powers, or at least against the pressures of a sectarian public opinion, and to face scorn and imprisonment. Christians do not hesitate, with the necessary discernment, to assume their responsibilities in this struggle for the dignity of their brothers and sisters, always showing a preference for non-violent means.(65)

27. In her denunciations of racism, however, the Church tries to maintain an evangelical attitude with regard to all. This is undoubtedly her particular gift. While she is not afraid to examine lucidly the evils of racism and disapprove of them, even to those who are responsible for them, she also seeks to understand how these people could have reached that point. She would like to help them find a reasonable way out of the impasse in which they find themselves. Just as God does not take pleasure at the death of a sinner,(66) the Church aspires more to helping them if they consent to remedy the injustice committed. She is also concerned with preventing victims from having recourse to violent struggle and thus falling into a racism similar to that which they are rejecting. The Church wishes to be a place for reconciliation and does not want to heighten opposition. She invites all to act in such

a way that hatred be banished. She preaches love. She patiently prepares a change in mentality without which structural changes would be in vain.

28. In the formation of a non-racist conscience, the role of schools is primordial. The Magisterium of the Church has always highlighted the importance of an education that stresses what is common to all. It is also important to show that others, precisely because they are different, can enrich our experience. While it is normal, for instance, for history to cultivate esteem for one's country, it is regrettable that it can lead to a blind chauvinism and to according only a secondary place to the achievements of other nations, considered inferior. As has already been done in some countries, it may be necessary to revise scholastic texts which falsify history, pass over the historical misdeeds of racism in silence or justify the principles behind it. In the same way, civic education must be conceived in such a way so as to uproot discriminatory reflexes toward persons belonging to other ethnic groups. More and more, the school provides the occasion for the children of immigrants to mix with the children of the receiving country. Hopefully this will provide an opportunity to help both groups to know one another better and to prepare a more harmonious coexistence.

In addition, many young people today seem to be less prone to racial prejudice. This provides a hope for the future which must be fostered. On the other hand, it is regrettable to see other young people organized into gangs in order to commit acts of violence against certain racial groups, or turning sports events into chauvinistic demonstrations which end up in vandalism or massacres. Unless they are ideologically nurtured, racial prejudices most often come from ignorance about others which gives full vent to imagination and engenders fear. There is no lack of occasions today for accustoming young people to respect and esteem for differences: international exchanges, travel, language courses, the twinning of cities, vacation camps, international schools, sports and cultural activities.

29. Persuasion and education must be coupled with the will to translate respect for other ethnic groups into legislation and into the structures and functioning of regional or national institutions.

Racism will disappear from legal texts only when it dies in people's hearts. However, there must also be direct action in the legislative field. Wherever discriminatory laws still exist, the citizens who are aware of the perversity of this ideology must assume their responsibilities so that, through democratic processes, legislation will be put in harmony with the moral law. Within a given State, the law must be equal for all citizens without distinction. A dominant group, whether numerically in the majority or minority, can never do as it likes with the basic rights of other groups. It is important for ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities who live within the borders of the same State, to enjoy recognition of the same inalienable rights as other citizens, including the right to live together according to their specific cultural and religious characteristics. Their choice to be integrated into the surrounding culture must be a free one.(67)

The status of other citizens or persons, such as immigrants or refugees, or temporary foreign workers, is often more precarious. It is all the more urgent that their basic human rights be recognized and guaranteed. It is precisely these people who are most often the victims of racial prejudice. The law must take care to check any act of aggressivity toward them as well as the conduct of anyone- employers,

functionaries or private individuals-who attempts to subject these more vulnerable persons to various forms of exploitation, be it economic or other.

Of course, it is up to the public powers who are responsible for the common good to determine the number of refugees or immigrants which their country can accept, taking into consideration its possibilities for employment and its perspectives for development but also the urgency of the need of other people. The State must also see to it that a serious social imbalance is not created which would be accompanied by sociological phenomena of rejection such as those which can occur when an overly heavy concentration of persons from another culture is perceived as directly threatening the identity and customs of the local community that receives them. In the apprenticeship to difference, everything cannot be expected all at once, but the possibilities for new ways of living together and even of mutual enrichment must be considered. Once a foreigner is admitted to a country and accepts the rules of public order, he or she has the right to protection by the law for the entire duration of his or her stay there.

In the same way, labor legislation should not permit that, for equal work, non-citizens who have found employment in a country should offer discrimination compared to nativeborn workers with regard to salary, social security and old age insurance. It is precisely in work relations that a better knowledge about, and mutual acceptance of, persons from different ethnic and cultural origins should grow, and a human solidarity be built which is capable of overcoming earlier prejudices.

30. On the international level, it is important to continue to draw up juridical instruments to overcome racism and, above all, to make them fully effective.

After the excesses of Nazism, the United Nations committed itself wholeheartedly to respect for persons and peoples.(68) An important International Convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination was adopted by the Twentieth General Assembly of the United Nations on December 21, 1965. Among other things it stipulates that "there is no justification for racial discrimination in theory or in practice, anywhere" (Preamble, \_6). It also foresees legislative and judicial measures for enacting these provisions. It came into force on January 4, 1969, and the Holy See formally ratified it on May 1st of the same year.

The United Nations also decided on November 2, 1973, to proclaim a "Decade to combat racism and racial discrimination." Pope Paul VI immediately expressed "his lively interest" and "deep satisfaction" for this new initiative:

"This pre-eminently human undertaking will once again find the Holy See and the United Nations in close accord-albeit on different levels and with different means."(69)

Since 1946, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) has had a Commission on Human Rights, which, in turn, set up a Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

The Holy See's contribution continued through the participation of its delegations in several important manifestations of the Decade, and also in other inter-governmental meetings.(70) Since then a second "Decade" has been proclaimed (1983-1993).

31. These efforts by the Holy See, as a duly recognized member of the international community, must not be considered in isolation from the many and diverse efforts of Christian communities around the world nor from the personal commitment of Christians in civil institutions.

In this context, special mention could be made of the contribution of various episcopates across the world. One could cite, by way of example, the efforts made by the bishops of two countries which have experienced the problems of racism in a particularly acute, if albeit, different way.

The first example is that of the United States of America, where racial discrimination had been maintained in the legislation of several states long after the Civil War (1861-1865). It was only in 1964 that the Civil Rights Law put an end to all forms of legally practiced discrimination. This represented a considerable step forward, matured over a long period and marked by numerous initiatives of a non-violent nature. The Catholic Church, especially through its extensive educational system, as well as through the declarations of the episcopate, contributed to this process.(71)

Despite on-going efforts, much still remains to be done to completely eliminate racial prejudice and behavior even in what can be considered one of the most interracial nations of the world. Proof of this is the statement adopted by the Administrative Board of the United States Catholic Conference on March 26, 1987, which pointed out the persistence of signs of racism in American society and condemned the activity of racist organizations such as the "Ku Klux Klan."

The second example is that of the Church in South Africa, faced with quite a different situation. The commitment of the; South African bishops, very often in close collaboration with the other Christian Churches, to racial equality and against apartheid is well known. In this regard, the following more recent documents of the Episcopal Conference could be mentioned: Pastoral letter published on May 1st, 1986, with the significant title: "Christian Hope in the Current Crisis"(72) and the Message addressed to the Head of State in August, 1986.(73)

The situation in South Africa has given rise, across the world, to manifestations of solidarity with those who suffer because of apartheid as well as in support of ecclesial initiatives.(74) Furthermore, these initiatives are frequently carried out ecumenically. Pope John Paul II, for his part, has repeatedly expressed his concern to the Catholic bishops of South Africa.(75)

On September 10, 1988, during his visit to Southern Africa, the pope addressed all the bishops of the region, gathered in Harare, and said to them in particular: "The question of apartheid, understood as a system of social, economic and political discrimination, engages your mission as teachers and spiritual guides of your flocks in a necessary and determined effort to counteract injustices and to advocate the replacement of that policy with one consistent with justice and love. I encourage you to continue to hold firmly and courageously to the principles which are at the basis of a peaceful and just response to the legitimate aspirations of all your fellow-citizens.

"I am aware of the attitudes expressed over the years by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, from the first corporate statement of 1952. The Holy See and I myself have drawn attention to the injustices of apartheid on numerous occasions, and most recently before an ecumenical group of Christian leaders from South Africa on a visit to Rome. To them I recalled that `since reconciliation is at the heart of the Gospel, Christians cannot accept structures of racial discrimination which violate human rights. But they must also realize that a change of structures is linked to a change of hearts. The changes they seek are rooted in the power of love, the Divine Love from which every Christian action and transformation springs' (Address to a Joint Ecumenical Delegation from South Africa, May 27, 1988)."(76)

32. Lastly, if racism troubles the peace of societies, it also poisons international peace. Where there is no justice on this major issue, violence and wars easily break out, and relations with neighboring nations are disturbed.

In relations between States, a faithful application of the principles of the equal dignity of all peoples should exclude that certain nations be treated by others on the basis of racial prejudices. In tensions between States, certain political decisions of an adversary can be condemned, as well as unjust behavior on one or another given point, or possibly the failure to keep a promise, but a people cannot be globally condemned for what is often the fault of its leaders. It is through such primary, irrational reactions that racial prejudices can get the upper hand and poison relations between nations in a lasting way.

The international community does not have any means of coercion at its disposal with regard to States which, through their legal system, still practice racial discrimination toward their own peoples. Nevertheless, international law does allow for appropriate external pressure to be exercised in their regard, to lead them, according to an organic and negotiated plan, to abolish racist legislation in favor of a legislation in conformity with human rights. However, the international community must take the greatest care in these delicate situations, lest its action precipitate the country concerned into even more dramatic internal conflicts.

As for countries where serious racial tensions exist, they must become aware of the precariousness of a peace which does not rest on the consensus of all the society's components. History shows that the prolonged failure to recognize human rights almost always ends in outbreaks of uncontrollable violence. In order to establish an order based on law, antagonist groups must let themselves be won over by supreme and transcendent values which are the basis of all human communities and all peaceful relations among nations.

## Conclusion

33. The effort to overcome racism does in fact seem to have become an imperative which is broadly anchored in human consciences. The 1965 U.N. Convention expressed this conviction forcefully: "Any doctrine of superiority based on the difference between races is scientifically false, morally condemnable and socially unjust and dangerous."<sup>(77)</sup> The Church's doctrine affirms it with no less vigor all racist theories are contrary to Christian faith and love. And yet, in sharp contrast to this growing awareness of human dignity, racism still exists and continually reappears in different forms. It is a wound in humanity's side that mysteriously remains open. Everyone, therefore, must make efforts to heal it with great firmness and patience.

There is no question, however, of grouping everything together. There are different degrees and forms of racism. Racism as such is applied to contempt for a race characterized by its ethnic origin, color or language. Today apartheid is the most marked and systematic form of this: change is absolutely necessary and urgent here. There are, however, many other forms of exclusion and rejection for which the reason invoked is not race, but which have similar effects. All forms of discrimination must be firmly opposed. It would be hypocritical to point a finger at only one country: rejection based on race exists on every continent. Many practice a discrimination in fact which they abhor in law.

Respect for every person and every race is respect for basic rights, dignity and

fundamental equality. This does not mean erasing cultural differences. Instead it is important to educate to a positive appreciation of the complementary diversity of peoples. A well- understood pluralism resolves the problem of closed racism. Racism and racist acts must be condemned. The application of legislative, disciplinary and administrative measures, or even appropriate external pressure, can be timely. Countries and international organizations have at their disposal a whole range of initiatives to be taken or encouraged. It is equally the responsibility of the citizens concerned, but without, for that reason, going so far as to replace violently one unjust situation with another injustice. Constructive solutions must always be envisaged.

The Catholic Church encourages all these efforts. The Holy See has its role to play in the context of its specific mission. All Catholics are invited to work concretely side by side with other Christians and all others who have this same respect for persons. The Church wants first and foremost to change racist attitudes, including those within her own communities. She appeals first of all to the moral and religious sense of people. She states exigencies but uses fraternal persuasion, her only weapon. She asks God to change hearts. She offers a place for reconciliation. She would like to see promoted initiatives of welcome, of exchange and of mutual assistance as regards men and women belonging to other ethnic groups. Her mission is to give soul to this immense undertaking of human fraternity. Despite the sinful limitations of her members, yesterday and today, she is aware of having been constituted a witness to Christ's charity on earth, a sign and instrument of the unity of humankind. The message she proposes to everyone, and which she tries to live is: "Every person is my brother or sister."

November 3, 1988 Liturgical Memorial of St. Martin of Porres (Born in Lima of a Spanish father and a black slave mother)

Roger Cardinal Etcheagaray  
*President Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace*

Jorge Mejia  
*Vice President Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace*

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## Notes

1. Cf. Eph 2:14.
2. Cf. Ex 19:5 ("my very own," translation from the Jerusalem Bible).
3. Cf. Mk 16:15; Mt 28:19.
4. Ad Nat. 1, 8; PL 1, 601.
5. *Coleccion de documentos ineditados relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organizacion de las antiguas posesiones espanolas de America y Oceania*, vol 7, Madrid, 1867, 414. See also the Brief, *Pastorale Officium*, of May 29, 1537 to the Archbishop of Toledo in *ibid.*, 414, and H. Denzinger-A. Schoenmetzer, *Enchiridion*

Symbolorum, Barcelona, 1973.

6. "Do not put any pressure on or bring forth any arguments to convince these peoples to change their rites, their customs and habits unless they are obviously contrary to religion and morality. What could be more absurd than transporting France, Spain, Italy or any other European country to the Chinese. Do not present our countries to them but rather the faith.... Do not try to substitute European customs for those of these peoples, and be most careful to adapt yourselves to them." *Collectanea S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide seu Decreta, Instructiones, Prescripta pro apostolicis missionibus* (1622-1866), vol. I, Rome, 1907, n. 135; and *Codicis Iuris Canonici Fontes* (ed. Cardinal J. Seregi), Vatican, 1935, vol. VII, n. 4463, p. 20.

7. For example, the interpretation that some fundamentalists gave to the curse made by Noah on his son, Ham-condemned, in his grandson Canaan, to be his brothers' slave-is well known (cf. Gen 9:24-27). They misunderstood the meaning and scope of the sacred text, which referred to a certain historical situation: the difficult relations between the Canaanites and the people of Israel. They wanted to see in Ham or Canaan the ancestor of the African peoples whom they had subjugated and, consequently, they considered them marked by God with an indelible inferiority which destined them to serve whites forever.

8. Cf., among others, the works of J. A. Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inegalite des races humaines*, 4 vol., Paris, 1853-55. Gobineau took his inspiration from Darwin and extended his theses on the natural selection of species to societies and civilizations.

9. On March 25, 1928, a decree of the Holy Office condemned anti-Semitism: AAS XX (1928), 103-104.

10. AAS XXIX (1937), 149.

11. Cf. *Documentation Catholique* (DC), 1938, 579-580. In a discourse to the members of the College of Propaganda Fide on July 28, 1938, Pius XI again stated: "Catholic means universal, not racist, not nationalistic in the separatist meaning of these two attributes.... We do not wish to separate anything in the human family.... The term 'humankind' reveals precisely what the human race is. It must be stated that people are first and foremost all one great and single species, one great and single family of living beings.... There is only one human, universal 'catholic' race...and with it and in it, different variations.... This is the Church's response," in *L'Osservatore Romano* (OR), July 30, 1938, cf. DC 1938, 1058-1961.

12. Cf. encyclical *Summi Pontificatus*, October 28, 1939, AAS XXXI (1939), 481-509.

13. 1942 Christmas Radio Message, nn. 20 and 70, AAS XXXV (1943), 14; 23.

14. To the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference meeting in Maternushaus of the Archdiocese of Cologne, John Paul II pointed out the witness given by the Cardinal Count Clemens August von Galen, the Carmelite Edith Stein, the Jesuit Rupert Mayer and "numerous other courageous witnesses who, in the face of inhuman tyranny, stood up on grounds of religious belief or humanitarianism.... All of them

together represent the other Germany which refused to bow to arrogance and brute force and which was able, after the final collapse, to serve as a sound nucleus and source of strength for the magnificent moral and material reconstruction which followed" (*OR*, English ed., May 18, 1987, 17).

15. On November 30, 1973, the United Nations adopted an International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid. See also, concerning the consequences of apartheid on employment: Seventh Regional Conference of the ILO in Harare, Zimbabwe, from November 29 to December 7, 1988.

16. Paul VI, *Allocution to the U.N. Special Committee on Apartheid*, May 22, 1974 in *AAS LXVI* (1974), 342-346; John Paul II, *Allocution to the same Committee*, July 7, 1984, in *OR*, English ed., n. 29, 16.7.1984, 11-12, Discourse to the Civil Authorities and Diplomatic Corps in Yaounde, August 12, 1985, No. 13, in *OR*, English ed., n. 29, 16.7.1984, 11-12; Discourse to the Civil Authorities and Diplomatic Corps in Yaounde, August 12, 1985, No. 13, in *OR*, English ed. n. 35, 2.9.1985, 8-9.

17. Cf. *Discourse of John Paul II to the Diplomatic Corps*, January 11, 1986, No. 4, in *OR*, English ed., n. 3, 20.1.1986, 1-4.

18. Cf. five discourses of John Paul II: —to the Indians of Ecuador, in Latacunga, January 31, 1985, in *OR*, English ed., n. 9, 4.3.1985, 5-10; —to the Indians of Peru, in Cuzco, February 3, 1985, in *OR*, English ed., n. 12, 25.3.1985, 3-4; —to the Aborigines of Australia, in Alice Springs, November 29, 1986, in *OR*, English ed., n. 49, 9.12.1986, 16-18; -to the North American Indians, in Phoenix, September 14, 1987, in *OR*, English ed., n. 38, 21.9.1987, 21-22; —to the Indians of Canada, in Fort Simpson, September 20, 1987, in *OR*, English ed., n. 40, 5.10.1987, 11-12. — cf. also John Paul II, 1989 World Day of Peace Message: "To Build Peace, Respect Minorities."

19. With regard to Africa, see Paul VI, *Africae Terrarum* Message to the Catholic Hierarchy in Africa, October 20, 1967, in *AAS LIX* (1967), 1073-1097; Discourse to the Parliament of Uganda, August 1, 1969, in *AAS LXI* (1969), 584-585; Discourse to the Diplomatic Corps, January 14, 1978, *AAS, LXX* (1978), 172-173; John Paul II, Discourse to the Authorities and to the Diplomatic Corps in Yaounde, August 12, 1985, nn. 11 and 12, in *OR*, English ed., n. 35, 2.9.1985, 8-9.

20. In particular, Pope John Paul II has often recalled that the Palestinian people have the right to a country as do the Jewish people.

21. Cf. Discourse of John Paul II during his visit to the Synagogue of Rome on April 13, 1986, in *OR*, English ed., n. 16, 21.4.1986, 6-7.

22. Cf. Instruction of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation, *Donum Vitae*, February 22, 1987, III: "Eugenism and forms of discrimination between human beings could come to be legitimized: this would constitute an act of violence and a serious offense to the equality, dignity and fundamental rights of the human person."

23. Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 29; cf. also *ibid.*, n. 60 (for the right to culture);



cf. Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, n. 5; Decree *Ad Gentes*, n. 15;  
Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis*, n. 1 (for the right to education).

24. Discourse to the Diplomatic Corps, January 14, 1978: *AAS LXX* (1978), 172.  
Many other previous texts expressed similar thoughts, in particular:  
encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, nn. 47 and 63; Message of Paul VI to the peoples  
of Africa read before the Uganda Parliament on August 1, 1969: *AAS LXI* (1969),  
580-586; Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* of Paul VI, n. 16: *AAS*  
*LXIII* (1971), 413; Message for the 1971 World Day of Peace: "Every man is my  
brother."

25. Allocution of John Paul II to the U.N. Special Committee against Apartheid,  
July 7, 1984, in *OR*, English ed., n. 29, 16.7.1984, 11-12.

26. *Le racisme devant la science*, UNESCO, Paris, 1973, n. 1, 369.

27. Cf. Gen 1:26-27; 5:1-2; 9:6-it is forbidden to shed the blood of man created in  
God's image.

28. Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, n. 5, quoted in the Discourse of John Paul to Muslim  
Youth in Casablanca, August 19, 1985, which adds: "This obedience to God and  
love for man must lead us to respect human rights, those rights which are the  
expression of God's will and the requirement of human nature just as God created  
it," *OR*, English ed., n. 37, 16.9.1985, 7.

29. Gen 3:20.

30. Tb 8:6.

31. Cf. Gen 5:1.

32. Cf. Acts 17:26, 28, 29.

33. Cf. Gen 9:11ff.

34. Gen 12:3; Acts 3:25.

35. Cf. Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.

36. Col 1:15; cf. 2 Cor 4:4.

37. Cf. Phil 2:6-7.

38. Rm 8:29.

39. Roman Missal, Offertory.

40. Cf. *Adversus Haereses*, III, 22, 3: "The Lord is the one who recapitulated in  
himself all the scattered nations descended from Adam, all the languages and  
generations of men including Adam himself." Irenaeus was inspired by St. Paul: Eph  
1:10; Col 1:20.

41. Cf. Rm 1:16-17.
42. Cf. Eph 2:11-13.
43. Ibid., 2:14
44. Cf. ibid., 2:15-16.
45. Col 3:11; cf. Gal 3:28.
46. Cf. Jn 11:52.
47. Cf. Jn 4:4-42.
48. Cf. Lk 10:33.
49. Cf. Mk 7:24.
50. Mt 25:38, 40.
51. Mt 28:19.
52. Eucharistic Prayer III.
53. Cf. Acts 2:5.
54. Cf. Gen 11:1-9.
55. Acts 10:28, 34.
56. Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 1.
57. Decree *Ad Gentes*, n. 8.
58. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 32.
59. Cf. Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* of John XXIII, April 11, 1963, which denounces, following Pius XI, the scandal constituted by the persistence of ideologies according to which "some human beings or nations are superior to others by nature."
60. Theme of the 1971 World Day of Peace.
61. Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 38.
62. Ibid., n. 39.
63. Cf. Mk 7:21-23.
64. Cf. Jn 3:21.

65. Instruction of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *On Christian Freedom and Liberation*, March 22, 1986, nn. 78, 79. "Situations of grave injustice require the courage to make far-reaching reforms and to suppress unjustifiable privileges. But those who discredit the path of reform and favor the myth of revolution not only foster the illusion that the abolition of an evil situation is in itself sufficient to create a more humane society; they also encourage the setting up of totalitarian regimes. The fight against injustice is meaningless unless it is waged with a view to establishing a new social and political order in conformity with the demands of justice. Justice must already mark each stage of the establishment of this new order. There is a morality of means.... Indeed, because of the continual development of the technology of violence and the increasingly serious dangers implied in its recourse, that which today is termed 'passive resistance' shows a way more conformable to moral principles and having no less prospects for success."

66. Cf. Ezk 18:32.

67. Cf. John Paul II, 1989 World Day of Peace Message: "To Build Peace, Respect Minorities."

68. In particular: United Nations Charter of June 26, 1945, art 1, 3; Universal Declaration of Human Rights of December 10, 1948, art. 1, 2, 16, 26; II; United Nations Declaration on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination of November 20, 1963.

69. Message to the United Nations for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, December 10, 1973, *AAS LXV* (1973), 673-677. On the occasion of the above mentioned decade, in 1978, the Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace published a brochure written by Rev. Roger Heckel, S.J., entitled: *Struggle Against Racism: The Church's Contribution* which gave an overview of the issue.

70. Particular mention could be made of: —the International Conference on Namibia and Human Rights (Dakar, January 5-8, 1976); —the World Conference for action against apartheid (Lagos, August 22-26, 1977); —the meeting of governmental representatives charged with drawing up a draft declaration on race and racial prejudice (UNESCO, Paris, March 13-21, 1978); —the World Conference on the struggle against racism and racial discrimination (Geneva, August 14-25, 1978); —the Second World Conference on the struggle against racism and racial discrimination (Geneva, August 1-12, 1983).

71. Cf. the most important document of the last decade: "Brothers and Sisters to Us: A Pastoral Letter on Racism in Our Day," published in 1979.

72. Cf. *Origins*, vol. 16, nn. 1, 11.

73. Cf. *OR*, English ed., n. 46, 17.11.1986, 15.

74. Particular mention must be made of the letter which Cardinal Roger Etchegaray addressed to the Most Rev. Denis Hurley (then President of the Episcopal Conference) on March 8, 1986 in order to encourage the bishops' efforts and

envisage possible steps for overcoming the conflicts. Cf. *OR*, English ed., n. 17, 28.4.1986, 10.

75. In particular on the occasion of Ad limina visits, the last of which took place in November, 1987. Cf. Discourse of John Paul II in *OR*, English ed., n. 49, 7.12.1987, 2.

76. *OR*, English ed., 37, 12.9.1988, 3.

77. Par. 6 of the Preamble of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which was adopted on December 21, 1965, and which entered into force on January 4, 1969.