

The Pope

Liberty Is a Precious Gift of the Human Person

Following is an NC News translation of the Vatican text of Pope John Paul II's Spanish-language address to King Juan Carlos, Queen Sofia, and Spanish political leaders at a reception at the royal palace in Madrid.

It is a cause of satisfaction to me to have this meeting with your majesties, with the government authorities and representatives of parliament, as well as with other distinguished members of the most qualified sectors of Spanish society.



I give thanks above all for the exquisitely courteous reception, in perfect harmony with the Spanish people's deep sense of hospitality, and the deferential words of his majesty, which interpret the feelings of Spaniards so authoritatively. Even though my trip to Spain is of an eminently religious nature, through this courtesy visit I would like to pay my respects to the legitimate representatives of the Spanish people. The people have elected them as bearers of their mandate to rule the destinies of the nation. In this way, I would like to remove any doubts — if there were any — about my respect for the country's freely elected leaders.

Along the same lines of my preceding apostolic journeys, I arrive in Spain as messenger of the faith, in order to accomplish Christ's mandate to teach his doctrine to all

peoples, a message new to every person and generation. It is always the Good News, for it tells of faith, of love among mankind, respect for man's dignity, and fundamental values, peace, concord, liberty and coexistence. These are all causes which help the promotion of man and which take up so much time on my trips. It is good news as well for the people, especially when they are engaged in building up their present and their future on renewed foundations. For the church, rightfully respecting the spheres that are not its own, marks out a moral course which coincides with, and does not diverge from nor contradict, the demands and dignity of the human person and the rights and freedoms inherent in it. And this constitutes the platform of a healthy society.

It is logical at the same time that, faithful to its duty and yet respecting the autonomy of the temporal order, the church asks the same consideration towards its mission, when it is a question of things having to do with God or the conscience of its sons and daughters, in the various manifestations of their personal and social, private and public lives.

I am conscious that I come to a nation with a grand Catholic tradition, that many of her children contributed intensely to the humanization and evangelization of other peoples. There are pages of history which speak very highly of your past. Today, you are involved in a new direction in your public framework which respects the diversity of opinions in the country. Without claiming to give concrete judgments on aspects which do not enter into my competence I pray God to give you certitude in the solutions to be adopted, for the sake of preserving harmonious coexistence, the solidarity, the mutual respect and the good

of all.

Such equilibrium in Spain will have positive repercussions in the geographical area of which you form a part, and into which you legitimately desire to integrate yourselves more fully. A Spain prosperous and at peace, engaged in promoting fraternal relations among her peoples, and not forgetful of her human, spiritual and moral essences, will be able to make a valuable contribution to a future of justice and peace in Europe and in the concert of nations, above all those with which she has special historical links.

I know that in order to attain these objectives, you are making efforts to create civil coexistence in liberty, participation and respect for human rights, within a plurality of legitimate options, and with due respect for them, such as is felt in Spanish society.

I wish for you that a solid and responsible liberty may ever be safeguarded, for it is a precious gift of the human person and a fruit of his dignity, and that your system of liberty may be based at every moment on observance of the moral values of the human person. Thus will liberty be able to be realized truly, individually and collectively.

I cannot conclude these words without renewing my gratitude to his majesty, the king, and to the government, for the invitation to come to this most noble land, and for all the facilities that are being afforded for the better carrying out of this visit. I assure you of my profound appreciation. May God bless the royal family, all the authorities and the beloved Spanish people, so that they may always enjoy a climate of peace, prosperity, justice and concord.

Catholic, Lutheran Bishops Urge Marking Luther's 500th Anniversary

Washington (NC) — Catholic and Lutheran bishops have recommended that the commemoration next year of the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's birth be used by the two groups to meet in study and prayer focused particularly on "the faith which justifies sinners."

The recommendation was one of the results of the eighth annual meeting of Lutheran and Catholic bishops Oct. 27-28 here under the auspices of Lutheran World Ministries and the Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious

Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Co-chairmen of the meeting were Archbishop John F. Whealon of Hartford, Conn., chairman of the bishops' committee, and Bishop James R. Crumley Jr. of the Lutheran Church in America.

International and national dialogues in recent years have re-examined the person and the work of Luther, said a background paper issued by the participants in the meeting.

"Lutherans cannot escape the fact that they have at times made Luther into a hero, instead of emphasizing that to which he devoted his life, the centrality of the Gospel," the paper said. "It is salutary for Lutherans to see Luther as he really was, warts and all.

"On the other hand, Luther has not always been correctly appreciated by Catholics and his theology has not always been correctly presented. Yet we note that in the last few decades Catholic scholars have come more adequately to understand the Reformation

and consequently Luther and his theology."

Among the factors leading to a change in the attitude of Catholics toward Luther's life and work are the passage of time and the suffering of disunity, the paper said.

The paper said also that an advance in historical and theological research has led to a more correct understanding of Luther and his teaching among Catholic scholars.

Among the matters discussed at the meeting were

geographical alignments of Catholic dioceses and Lutheran districts-synods where possible in the future, Catholic-Lutheran mixed marriages, and Catholic-Lutheran relationships in the area of campus ministry.

Catholic participants presented the second draft of a pastoral letter prepared by the bishops' committee on war and peace. The document will be discussed at the bishops' annual general meeting. The Lutherans reported on the same area of concern which was acted on at conventions

last summer.

Participants in the meeting included bishops from the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches.

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Fr. John Reedy



Looking for the Lord

We Can't Afford To Wait

The one-month papacy of John Paul I left us with only a few memories.

One of them was the wonderfully humane style of his message to the British parents of the first child ever born as a result of in vitro (laboratory) fertilization.

Many of us were charmed by the sensitivity of his response and shared his instinctive happiness in celebrating new life — before we began wrestling with the possible complexities involved in the scientific breakthrough.

The dimension of those complexities was illustrated in a recent NC News story by Robert Nowell. He listed a number of issues being considered by study commissions in Britain. Among them:

• The possibility of obtaining a number of ova from the woman who wants to have a child, fertilizing

them in a laboratory, then freezing them for use if the first attempt at implantation should fail.

• Doing the same thing with a young woman who wants to postpone child-bearing to her mid-30s or early 40s. The assumption is that the danger of Down's syndrome would be lessened.

• The possibility of splitting a fertilized ovum so that half could be retained for examination while the other half was implanted. The idea is that this would allow a better chance of identifying pre-natal defects.

• One of the scientists talked about already growing "spare" embryos in the laboratory (up until nine days) in order to look for chromosome defects.

These scientific developments and possibilities are scary. Our society is not yet ready to deal with them.

We are moving into a situation in which scientific possibilities are outpacing reflection and judgment on what should and should not be done in a society which respects human values.

The issues are not clear-cut. Just recently the Holy Father encouraged genetic research which might be used to correct chromosomal diseases before birth. (He also condemned experimental manipulations of the human embryo.)

We face a difficult problem of public opinion. Very careful, informed thinking is needed for the evaluation of these scientific possibilities. While scientists have consciences and personal values, this kind of ethical analysis is not their specialty.

It seems to me that three groups are under special pressure from the rapid pace of these scientific developments.

First, there are the scientists themselves who must provide the solid information about what is being done, what the effects will be. And they must recognize that society, as a whole, has an interest in these issues.

Second, public officials must begin to take the questions seriously, set up the machinery to elicit the scientific information and the ethical evaluation.

Finally, churches, moral theologians, ethicists must do better than they have thus far in trying to understand the facts and assist in the formation of a public conscience on the issues.

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