



# The Holy See

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**MESSAGE OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO CARDINAL PAUL POUPARD FOR THE 20th ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE**

*Your Eminence,*

1. I willingly join with you and your staff, the ambassadors accredited to the Holy See and all the public figures who have gathered to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Pontifical Council for Culture.

Dialogue between Church and cultures is vital for development of the human being. Since the beginning of my Pontificate, I have taken every opportunity to emphasize the importance of the dialogue between the Church and cultures. This area is vital, not only for the new evangelization and inculturation of the faith, but also for the destiny of the world and the future of humanity.

In the past 20 years, the mindset and customs of our societies have changed radically, whereas with the advent of the modern communications technologies, our technical progress has had a deep influence on man's relations with nature, with himself, and with others. Even globalization, at first restricted to the economic context, has now become a phenomenon that also invades other sectors of human life. In the face of these cultural changes, what appears ever relevant is the reflection of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council who, in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, wished to stress the importance of culture for the full development of the human being. In my Autograph Letter for the creation of the Pontifical Council of Culture, I wrote: "The synthesis between culture and faith is not just a demand of culture, but also of faith.... A faith which does not become culture is a faith which has not been fully received, not thoroughly thought through, not faithfully lived out" (*Letter to Cardinal Agostino Casaroli establishing the Pontifical Council of Culture*, 20 May 1982; *ORE*, 28 June 1982, p. 7).

2. After the Council, these were recurrent topics at the assemblies of the Synod of Bishops and I

have treated them in a number of Apostolic Exhortations. Now I would like to thank this Pontifical Council, which I created on 20 May 1982, for all its help to me in this area that is so important for the Church's missionary action.

Then in 1993, I merged the Pontifical Council for Dialogue with Non-Believers, founded by my venerable Predecessor, the Servant of God Paul VI, with this Council, in the conviction that culture is a privileged way to understanding the thoughts and feelings of those of our contemporaries who claim to have no religious belief. With this in view, I wrote for that occasion: "The Council promotes the meeting between the saving message of the Gospel and the cultures of our time, often marked by disbelief or religious indifference, so that they may be increasingly open to the Christian faith, which creates culture and is an inspirational source of science, literature and the arts" (Motu Proprio *Inde a Pontificatus*, 25 March 1993, art. 1; *ORE*, 12 May 1993, p. 3).

3. Your Eminence, I would like to make the most of this festive occasion to encourage the Pontifical Council for Culture and all its members to persevere on the path they have taken, ensuring that the voice of the Holy See reach the various "areopagi" of modern culture, maintaining profitable contacts with those who cultivate art, science, letters and philosophy.

In ecclesial and intercultural sessions with science, culture and education as well as in the international organizations, may your constant effort witness to the Church's interest in the fruitful dialogue of Christ's Gospel with the cultures and to the effective participation of Catholics in building a society that is more respectful of the human person, created in God's image.

Since the feast of Pentecost is upon us, as I invoke the light of the divine Spirit upon the Council's activity I cordially impart to you, Your Eminence, to your colleagues and to all who have gathered to celebrate this happy anniversary, a special Apostolic Blessing.

*From the Vatican, 13 May 2002.*

**JOHN PAUL II**