



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE EUROPEAN CONGRESS  
ORGANIZED BY "THE MOVEMENTS FOR LIFE"**

*Monday, 26 February 1979*

*Gentlemen!*

Welcome to the Pope's house! I willingly accepted the desire you expressed for a special Audience on the occasion of your second European Congress, because this meeting offers me the opportunity to say to you, and to all members of the Movements for Life, a word of praise and encouragement to persevere in the noble task which you have assumed in defence of man and of his fundamental rights. You are struggling in order that every man may be recognized as having the right to be born, to grow, to develop his own capacities harmoniously, to construct his own transcendent destiny freely and in a dignified way.

These are very noble purposes and I am happy to see that not only the sons of the Catholic Church but also members of other religious confessions and persons of different ideological trend are united in pursuing them, because I consider that an expression of that "agreement in supporting one another on some elementary but firm principles", "principles of humanity", which "every man of good will can find... in his own conscience", to which I referred in my recent [Message for the World Day of Peace](#).

Faithful to the mission received from her divine Founder, the Church has always affirmed the sacredness of human life, and did so with particular forcefulness at the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. Who does not remember those solemn words? "God, the Lord of life, has entrusted to men the noble mission of safeguarding life, and men must carry it out in a manner worthy of themselves. Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception (*Gaudium et Spes*, 51). Strong in this conviction, the Council Fathers did not hesitate to condemn bluntly "all offences against life itself, such as murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and willful

suicide; all violations of the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture, undue psychological pressures; all offences against human dignity, such as sub-human living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, degrading working conditions where men are treated as mere tools for profit rather than free and responsible persons" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 27).

This is the context in which your commitment is set. It consists in the first place of an intelligent and assiduous action to make consciences become aware of the inviolability of human life at all its stages, so that the right to it will be effectively recognized in morals and in laws, as a basic value of every society that wants to call itself civil. It is expressed, furthermore, in the *courageous stand* against every form of attack on life, from whatever quarter it may come. Finally, it takes the form of a disinterested and respectful offer of *concrete help for persons* who are up against difficulties in making their behaviour conform with the dictates of conscience.

It is a work of great humanity and generous charity, which cannot but meet with the approval of every person aware of the possibilities and the risks which are in store for this society of ours.

Do not be discouraged by the difficulties, opposition, and failure you may meet with on your way. It is a question of man and, with such a stake, no one can shut himself up in an attitude of resigned passivity without thereby abdicating as a human being. As Vicar of Christ the Word of God Incarnate, I say to you: have faith in God, the Creator and Father of every human being; have confidence in man, created in the image and likeness of God and called to be his son, in the Son. In Christ, who died and rose again, man's cause has already had its definitive verdict: life will overcome death!

With this hope in my heart, I willingly grant you all my Apostolic Blessing, as a token of divine assistance.

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