



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS OF
THE RELIGIOUS ALLIANCE AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY**

Thursday, 30 January 1992

Your Eminences,
Your Excellency,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am pleased to have this opportunity to meet with the members of the planning committee of the *Religious Alliance against Pornography*. As an interreligious group composed of representatives of the Jewish, Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Protestant and Mormon communities, you are well-qualified to voice the concerns of an important segment of American society with regard to this grave social problem. Your discussions with the Pontifical Council for the Family help call attention to the urgent need for effective cooperation among all people of good will in opposing pornography and its damaging effects on the lives of individuals, families and society.
2. The proliferation of pornographic literature is only one indication of a broader crisis of moral values affecting contemporary society (Cf. Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Pornography and Violence in the Communications Media: A Pastoral Response*, 19-20). Pornography is immoral and ultimately anti-social precisely because it is opposed to the truth about the human person, made in the image and likeness of God (Cf. Gen. 1:26-27). By its very nature, *pornography denies* the genuine meaning of *human sexuality as a God-given gift* intended to open individuals to love and to sharing in the creative work of God through responsible procreation. By reducing the body to an instrument for the gratification of the senses, pornography frustrates authentic moral growth and undermines the development of mature and healthy relationships. It leads inexorably to the *exploitation of individuals*, especially those who are most vulnerable, as is so tragically evident in the case of child pornography.

As your Alliance has sought to make clear, the spread of pornography represents a *serious threat to society as a whole*. The strength of any society is measured by its ability to respect those moral imperatives which are grounded in the objective truth about the transcendent vocation of the human person. When a society exalts "freedom" for its own sake, and grows indifferent to the demands of truth, it ends by severely limiting man's true freedom—the interior freedom of the spirit. Freedom, once detached from its moral foundations, easily becomes confused with license. The effects of this confusion are unfortunately apparent in many Western societies in an increasing commercialization of sexuality. The production of pornography has become a thriving industry and its diffusion is at times considered a legitimate expression of free speech, with the consequent debasement of individuals, particularly women. The problem, however, is felt no less strongly in developing countries, where the expansion of the pornography industry is a source of concern precisely because it weakens the moral foundations so necessary for the integral development of those societies.

3. I am pleased that your meeting in the Vatican is taking place in conjunction with the Pontifical Council for the Family. The family is usually the first to suffer from pornography and its damaging effects on children. Consequently, as the primary cell of society, *the family must be the first champion* of the battle against this evil. It is my hope that your efforts to combat the plague of pornography will help families in their delicate task of forming the consciences of the young, instilling in them a deep reverence for sexuality and a mature appreciation of the virtues of modesty and chastity. At the same time, I trust that your work will help to increase public concern about the gravity of the ethical issues posed by pornography, and lead to a clearer awareness of the need for decisive intervention by the authorities charged with the promotion of the common good. Because every attack on the family and its integrity is an attack on the good of humanity (Cf. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 86), it is essential that the rights of families should be clearly acknowledged and safeguarded through appropriate legislation.

4. Dear friends: your meeting is a noteworthy example of religious believers coming together in order to address one of the great social ills of our time. I am convinced that by offering the "unanimous witness of our common convictions regarding the dignity of man, created by God" (John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 60), the followers of the various religions, both now and in the future, will contribute in no small measure to the growth of that "civilization of love" which is founded on the principles of an authentic humanism. I encourage your worthy efforts and I cordially invoke upon all of you the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

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