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Alle ore 11 di questa mattina, in Vaticano, ha luogo la Visita al Santo Padre Giovanni Paolo II di Sua Maestà la Regina Elisabetta II di Inghilterra, con Sua Altezza Reale il Duca Filippo di Edimburgo, e il Seguito.

Pubblichiamo di seguito i discorsi del Santo Padre e della Regina Elisabetta II di Inghilterra:

### ● DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE GIOVANNI PAOLO II

Your Majesty,

Your Royal Highness,

With enduring memories of our first meeting in the Vatican in 1980 and of your gracious welcome to me in London two years later, I am happy to greet you once again in this Apostolic Palace to which you are no stranger. My predecessors Pope Pius XII and Pope John XXIII first bade you welcome here, and I do the same with a still greater sense of occasion in this Jubilee Year when all Christians sing the praises of Almighty God for the gift of the Word made flesh, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Your Majesty's visit immediately brings to mind the rich heritage of British Christianity and all that Great Britain

has contributed to the building of Christian Europe, and indeed to the spread of Christianity throughout the world, since Saint Augustine of Canterbury preached the Gospel in your lands. Through that long history, relations between the United Kingdom and the Holy See have not always been untroubled; long years of common inheritance were followed by the sad years of division (cf. *Address in Canterbury Cathedral*, 29 May 1982, No. 5). But in recent years there has emerged between us a cordiality more in keeping with the harmony of earlier times and more genuinely expressive of our common spiritual roots. There can be no turning back from the ecumenical goal we have set ourselves in obedience to the Lord's command.

Yet it is not only the past which prompts us to pursue the path of ever greater understanding and, from the religious perspective, of ever more perfect communion. The future too demands of us a sense of shared purpose. I am thinking first of Europe, which stands at a turning-point in its history as it seeks a unity capable of excluding for ever the kind of conflicts which have been so much a part of its past. You and I have personally lived through one of Europe's most terrible wars, and we see clearly the need to build a deep and enduring European unity, firmly rooted in the genuine human and spiritual genius of Europe's peoples. However, the unity to which Europeans aspire cannot be a structure without content. Only by preserving and reinvigorating the highest ideals and achievements of its heritage – in politics, in law, in art, in culture, in morality and in spirituality – will the Europe of the near future be a viable and worthwhile endeavour.

Moreover, at the dawn of the third millennium our gaze must go beyond the bounds of Europe, for the world as a whole has become increasingly interactive and interdependent. The Commonwealth and the Catholic Church are institutions of a very different kind, but both have a proven experience in universality, both know the rich diversity of the one human family.

To set the common good as the aim and focus of human thought and action becomes more important than ever at a time when there are increasing disparities in the way the world's resources are shared. Even as we see the forces of globalization holding out the promise of greater prosperity and cohesion, there is an ever growing gap between rich and poor, a gap which is in danger of becoming more fixed and intractable as some benefit from the advances of technology while others are completely left out. This troubling phenomenon has many causes, but the problem will certainly not be solved unless peoples and their leaders accept worldwide solidarity and cooperation as ethical imperatives that impel and mobilize the consciences of individuals and nations. I cannot but express my appreciation of Britain's recent undertaking to effect a total cancellation of the debt owed to it by the heavily indebted poor countries. The new millennium calls upon us all to work effectively to achieve a world not contaminated by greed, self-interest and the lust for dominance, but open to and respectful of the human dignity, inalienable rights and fundamental equality of every member of the human family.

Your Majesty, for many years now and through times of great change you have reigned with a dignity and sense of duty which have edified millions of people around the world. May the Almighty grant Your Majesty, Your Royal Highness and the members of the Royal Family his unfailing light and strength amid the challenges and difficulties of your calling. May he bless the citizens of the United Kingdom with happiness and peace; the Commonwealth with the benefits of a heightened sense of solidarity and cooperation; and the Christian people of your realm with

a fresh outpouring of the grace of Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, today and for ever" (cf. *Heb 13:8*).

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#### **• DISCORSO DELLA REGINA ELISABETTA II DI INGHILTERRA**

Your Holiness,

It gives me very great pleasure on behalf of Prince Philip and myself to deliver this message to you of friendship and goodwill. We both recall the warm welcome we received from you on our last visit to the Vatican, exactly twenty years ago today, and we remember too our pleasure in welcoming you to Buckingham Palace when you came to Britain in 1982. Our visit today has particular significance, because it takes place in this year of the Great Jubilee.

One of the themes you have set for this Jubilee year is reconciliation between different cultures and faith communities. In a Christian context I am pleased to note the important progress that has been made in overcoming historic differences between Anglicans and Roman Catholics - as exemplified in particular by the meeting of Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops in Canada this year. I trust that we shall continue to advance along the path which leads to Christian unity.

Religion may sometimes be a source of division, but it can also be a powerful source of healing. In the United Kingdom, there has been progress towards peace between the two communities in Northern Ireland. We are most grateful for your help and support for this process. Many share a sense of real hope now, although there is so much still to do.

Your Holiness, you are spiritual leader of some one billion Roman Catholics. This includes some of the richest and many of the poorest people of the world. You have made alleviation of poverty a particular focus for the Jubilee Year. As Head of the Commonwealth of fifty-four independent nations I welcome and admire your personal commitment to this cause. For my government, helping the world's poor is a major priority, and we are actively supporting faster debt relief for the most heavily indebted countries, many of them in Africa. I pray for continued strength and determination by everyone to achieve this important goal.

The new Millennium reminds us all how Christianity has shaped so much of our world. As Christians of the twenty first century we are called anew to follow our Lord's teaching and, by standing with those in suffering, need and distress, to build a world more worthy of its Creator.

Your Holiness, Prince Philip and I are delighted to have the opportunity of returning to the Vatican, and of meeting you again. May we thank you for the warmth of your welcome, and wish you peace and happiness as we enter together this new Christian Millennium.

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