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MESSAGGIO DEL SANTO PADRE IN OCCASIONE DEL 30° ANNIVERSARIO DI FONDAZIONE DELLA WORLD CONFERENCE ON RELIGION AND PEACE

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Pubblichiamo di seguito il Messaggio che il Santo Padre ha inviato al Card. Peter Seiichi Shirayanagi, Arcivescovo emerito di Tokyo, in occasione della celebrazione del 30° anniversario della fondazione della World Conference on Religion and Peace, svoltasi a Kyoto il 27 e 28 novembre:

To my Venerable Brother

Cardinal Peter Seiichi Shirayanagi

Archbishop Emeritus of Tokyo

It is with joy that I have learned that the World Conference on Religion and Peace will celebrate its Thirtieth Anniversary with a commemorative event in Kyoto on November 27-28 this year. I would ask you kindly to convey to all present my best wishes and the assurance of my support. God, as the origin and destiny of all, has created us to live together in harmony. It is therefore fitting to celebrate the fact that people belonging to different religious traditions can come together and collaborate in a spirit of friendship and solidarity in building a world of peace. I pray that your endeavors will continue to be abundantly blessed with success.

The Catholic Church follows with great interest the work of reconciliation carried out by the World Conference on Religion and Peace in many parts of the world. To promote dialogue means to create bonds of friendship between peoples. It means forging new ties between groups, and teaching understanding and respect between the followers of the various religious traditions. In recent years, the World Conference on Religion and Peace has been particularly involved in reconciling communities which are divided due to conflicts and wars. Your efforts to heal those affected by hatred and violence express a truth which I too have sought to affirm on many occasions, that religion is not and must not become a pretext for hostility, in particular when religious, cultural and ethnic identities coincide.

Faced with the pressing problems of today's global society, all religions must feel called to fresh efforts to cooperate in order to promote human life and its dignity, to defend the family, to alleviate poverty, to bring about justice, to help preserve the eco-system of our earth. We would do well to recall words of the Message from the participants in the Interreligious Assembly held in the Vatican in October 1999: "*collaboration* among the different religions must be based on the rejection of fanaticism, extremism and mutual antagonisms which lead to violence. We are aware of the importance of *education* as a means for promoting mutual understanding, cooperation and respect".

I have pleasant memories of welcoming in the Vatican Synod Hall those present at the inaugural ceremony of the Sixth Assembly of the World Conference on Religion and Peace. I would like to repeat what I said on that occasion: "*Healing the world* through the commitment of *religions for peace* means that you look in faith and hope to the One in whom we 'live and move and have our being' (*Acts 17:28*), in order to become better instruments for the accomplishment of man's true destiny here and beyond" (*Address*, November 3, 1994, No. 4).

My prayer is that the Thirtieth Anniversary celebrations in Kyoto will be a time of re-commitment to the noble goals of the World Conference on Religion and Peace. God bless your efforts!

From the Vatican, November 1, 2000

IOANNES PAULUS II

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