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**MESSAGGIO DEL SANTO PADRE AI PARTECIPANTI ALLA CONFERENZA INTERNAZIONALE
SUL TEMA: PEACE AND TOLERANCE - DIALOGUE AND UNDERSTANDING IN SOUTH EAST
EUROPE, THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA (ISTANBUL, 7-9 NOVEMBRE 2005)**

MESSAGGIO DEL SANTO PADRE AI PARTECIPANTI ALLA CONFERENZA INTERNAZIONALE SUL TEMA:
*PEACE AND TOLERANCE - DIALOGUE AND UNDERSTANDING IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE, THE
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Dal 7 al 9 novembre 2005 ha luogo ad Istanbul la seconda edizione della Conferenza Internazionale promossa dal Patriarca ecumenico di Costantinopoli, Sua Santità Bartolomeo I, e dal Rabbino Arthur Schneier, Presidente della *Appeal of Conscience Foundation* di New York. L'iniziativa, a carattere interreligioso, si situa nel quadro delle relazioni bilaterali tra il Patriarcato ecumenico e le Organizzazioni ebraiche internazionali, ed è estesa a rappresentanti dell'Islam.

La Conferenza, dedicata al tema generale *Peace and Tolerance - Dialogue and Understanding in South East Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia*, si svolge sotto gli auspici del Presidente della Commissione Europea. Il suo scopo è di "*promuovere la collaborazione tra le tre grandi religioni monoteistiche: Ebraismo, Cristianesimo ed Islam per favorire il reciproco rispetto, l'accettazione dell'altro e realizzare una pacifica convivenza in un mondo che ha tanto crudelmente sofferto a causa delle guerre e dei conflitti*" (dalla lettera d'invito del Patriarca Bartolomeo I).

Il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI ha incaricato l'Em.mo Card. Walter Kasper, Presidente del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani e della Commissione della Santa Sede per i Rapporti Religiosi con l'Ebraismo, di rappresentarlo ad Istanbul e gli ha indirizzato un Suo Messaggio augurale ai partecipanti. Assieme al Card. Kasper sono presenti ad Istanbul, per tutta la durata della Conferenza, S.E. Mons. Antonio Maria Vegliò, Segretario della Congregazione per le Chiese Orientali, e il Rev.do P. Norbert Hofmann, S.D.B., Segretario della Commissione per i Rapporti Religiosi con l'Ebraismo.

Pubblichiamo di seguito il Messaggio del Santo Padre ai partecipanti alla Conferenza:

● **MESSAGGIO DEL SANTO PADRE**

To my Venerable Brother

CARDINAL WALTER KASPER

President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

and of the Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism

I was pleased to be informed of the Second Conference on Peace and Tolerance, organized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in conjunction with the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, on the theme: "Dialogue and Understanding in South-East Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia". I entrust you, Venerable Brother, with the task of conveying my cordial greetings to the participants who will be meeting in Istanbul during the coming days, as well as my appreciation for their strong commitment to fostering understanding and cooperation between the followers of different religions. In particular, I ask you to express my fraternal good wishes to His Holiness Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople and to assure Rabbi Arthur Schneider of my spiritual closeness at this time.

The themes of peace and tolerance are of vital importance in a world where rigid attitudes so often give rise to misunderstanding and suffering and can even lead to deadly violence. Dialogue is clearly indispensable if solutions are to be found to the harmful conflicts and tensions that cause so much damage to society. Only through dialogue can there be hope that the world will become a place of peace and fraternity.

It is the duty of every person of good will, and especially of every believer, to help build a peaceful society and to overcome the temptation towards aggressive and futile confrontation between different cultures and ethnic groups. Each of the world's peoples has a responsibility to make its own particular contribution to peace and harmony by placing its spiritual and cultural heritage and its ethical values at the service of the human family throughout the world. This goal can only be achieved if at the heart of the economic, social and cultural development of each community is a proper respect for life and for the dignity of every human person. A healthy society always promotes respect for the inviolable and inalienable rights of all people. Without "an objective moral grounding, not even democracy is capable of ensuring a stable peace" (*Evangelium vitae*, 70). In this sense, moral relativism undermines the workings of democracy, which by itself is not enough to guarantee tolerance and respect among peoples.

It is of fundamental importance, therefore, to educate in truth, and to foster reconciliation wherever there has been injury. Respect for the rights of others, bearing fruit in sincere and truthful dialogue, will indicate practical steps that can be taken. Every person of good will has a duty to work towards this goal. It is all the more urgent, however, for those who recognize in God the One who is Father of all, whose mercy is freely offered to all, who judges with justice and offers to all his life-giving friendship. For Christians, the Creator's generosity is visible in the face of Him whom God "made to be sin . . . so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 *Cor* 5:21), Christ our peace and our true reconciliation.

As I entrust these thoughts to you Venerable Brother, I ask you, on the occasion of this Conference, to reaffirm the Catholic Church's strong commitment to work tirelessly for cooperation between peoples, cultures and religions, so that abundant graces and heavenly blessings will descend upon all God's children.

From the Vatican, 4 November 2005

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

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