

Let Us Open Wide the Era of World Peace

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Photo date and location unknown

Distinguished leaders from every walk of life:

It gives me great pleasure to host this inaugural assembly of the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace (IIFWP).

The purpose of the various ecumenical and interfaith activities and organizations I have been developing over the past forty years has been the realization of a world of peace that God and human beings have been longing for. A vision for peace is the heart of any interfaith activity.

In the twentieth century humankind has suffered two devastating world wars and experienced confrontation and conflict for seventy years under the oppression of the atheistic communist ideology and the Cold War era. When that came to an end, the world drank a toast in celebration of peace, albeit briefly. All too soon we came to learn that the end of the Cold War era did not lead automatically to a time of peace. Violent conflicts continue to occur throughout the world today. Even now, massacres are being perpetrated in Yugoslavia, the Middle East, Sudan, South Asia and elsewhere. It is common knowledge that many such disputes have behind them deep-rooted religious conflict. These are only some examples that awaken us to the importance of dialogue and cooperation among religious groups.

World peace and the mind-body conflict

Often, in the modern era, religions work toward the realization of their ideals while keeping a certain distance from the realms of worldly power. This is generally accepted as the norm. I believe, however, that it is time for those international organizations that serve the cause of world peace to reexamine their relationship with the world's great religious traditions.

Perhaps the United Nations, more than any other international organization, serves as a good example. Many regard the UN as the institutionalized organization of the human ideal for world peace, and set their hopes on it. At the UN, representatives of all nations combine their efforts to solve the world's problems and to promote peace and human prosperity.

However, these efforts by the UN to realize world peace have always met with serious obstacles. While its accomplishments cannot be denied, one can observe that the UN could be improved in many ways. The time has come when a cooperative and mutually supportive relationship among the world's statesmen

and religious leaders is desperately needed.

Originally, human beings were meant to live with their mind and body united, responding to the complete, true love of God. Because human beings were created to be God's sons and daughters, resembling Him, their mind and body should not fight. Instead, they should create true unity. God's mind and body are not in conflict. Almighty God could never have any conflict within Himself. The human ideal of unified mind and body is realized when a person fully possesses the true love of God. The words from the Bible, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God," (Matt. 5:9) are also based on the premise that the ideal of unity of mind and body is to be attained on the basis of a relationship with our Heavenly Father. Due to the human Fall people lost the standard of unity and harmony between their mind and body, and have thus been living in self-contradiction and conflict. Moreover, the battle of the mind and body within the individual has expanded to the level of the family, society, nation and world. Cain's killing of his younger brother Abel originated from this.

All the conflicts and wars that the world has witnessed since the beginning of history have been, in essence, the battle between the Cain side, which is on the side of relative evil, and the Abel side, which is on the side of relative good. The struggle between the Cain and Abel sides should be terminated and everything restored to its original state. Likewise, the confrontation between our mind and body should be brought to an end, and harmony and unity regained.

We have to apply the principle of individual mind-body unity on the global level. For this purpose, I established the Inter-Religious Federation for World Peace, representing the world of the mind, and the Federation for World Peace, representing the world of the body. Together, they embrace the total concept of world peace.

Because the problems in human history have not just been political problems at the root, merely social or political solutions have always been insufficient. Most societies are governed politically, but on the other hand, at the official, cultural, and political base, there is religion. In fact, in most people's hearts religious loyalty has far more importance than political loyalty.

The role of religions in leading the world

It is now time for religion to exert genuine leadership in the world. I believe that religious people should feel responsible for the situation of humankind, and for resolving the various inequities of this age. Profound self-reflection is surely a prerequisite to this.

Religious people have failed to set an example in the practice of love. Now is indeed the time for them to repent for not having exerted themselves fully for the sake of world salvation. Instead, they have been absorbed in the pursuit of individual salvation and denominational interests. Mere belief in love is not enough. It must be accompanied by its practice. God is calling the leaders of society, but in particular the religious leaders. He wants us to challenge the injustices and sins of the world and establish true love in their place. All religious people should become one in heart, representing and carrying out God's aspirations for all people.

World peace can be realized through a synergy between the statesmanship and measures of politicians, who represent the body and the secular world, and the wisdom and effort of religious leaders, who represent the mind and the world of the spirit. The time has come for us to seriously reflect even on such a matter as restructuring the United Nations.

Let us imagine the UN adopting a two-house structure. We can think of changing the existing United Nations, which consists of national representatives who speak for their own nation's interests. Consider establishing a religious council or UN senate, consisting of distinguished religious leaders and leaders in fields pertaining more to the heart -- for example, culture and education. As a body representing a global perspective, this religious council would have to address the interests of all people, transcendent of regions or nations. Through mutual respect and cooperation, these two houses of the UN would be able to contribute enormously to the realization of world peace. The political wisdom of the world's leaders could thus be effectively complemented by the wisdom and vision of the world's most prominent religious leaders.

I am confident that the moral vision and exemplary lifestyle of religious leaders can be a lamp for humankind, not only pointing the way to the world beyond this one, but also teaching the road to genuine happiness and peace on this earth.

Religious leaders should become ideal leaders who not only inherit and pass on the precious and holy wisdom of their great traditions, but also lead lives of unselfish service. Selfishness disqualifies any leader, whether religious or political.

A fund for world peace

Through the regular holding of conferences to bring religious leaders together, I have been striving to carry out true love education transcendent of religious denomination and nationality. Last year, I and other religious leaders worldwide took the lead in suggesting that all religious people donate money of an amount based on the number seven, and thus pioneer the creation of a fund for world peace. Individuals and nations have different economic circumstances. For some, seven dollars would be a large offering; for others, seven million dollars would be possible. If all religious people of the world were united in heart, they would be able to not only raise funds, but also use the money effectively to promote the ideals of true love and the value of raising exemplary families.

Respected leaders, we should work together to implement a system through which the highest expressions of religious wisdom are brought to the table at which the world's most serious and urgent problems are being addressed. Such a system can be achieved by creating a council of religious leaders within the framework of the United Nations. Today, I would like to ask you to establish the IIFWP as a first step in realizing this goal. In addition, it is my sincere hope that you will generously offer your own experience, wisdom and effort as we work to realize these highest of ideals. Especially, I ask the world of religion to focus on education of true love.

I am confident that the IIFWP will make a decisive contribution to the realization of world peace, and I pray that God will bless you, your families and your work.

Thank you very much.