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UNIV 2003: True education to peace is urgent

This morning John Paul II exhorted university students, in Rome for the international UNIV Congress, to live with optimism, joy and peace, being understanding towards all.

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This morning in the Paul VI Hall, the Pope received participants in the annual UNIV international university congress who came from 30

countries around the world. The theme of this year's congress is "Building Peace in the 21st Century."

John Paul II affirmed that the congress' theme "is more timely than ever in these months in which we are so worried about the situation in Iraq, as well as so many violent and war-ridden situations which have erupted on other continents. All this makes a true education to peace more urgent."

"For believers," he continued, "the first and fundamental action in favor of peace is prayer, because peace is a gift of love from God. ... In order to be architects of peace it is especially necessary to live in the truth. Young people," he exclaimed, "have the courage to ask yourselves sincere questions on the meaning of truth; form yourselves with a clear rectitude of thought and action, of respect and dialogue with others.

Maintain in the first place an authentic relationship with God, which requires personal conversation and an openness to His mystery."

The Holy Father emphasized that "justice is connected to truth, as well as to respect of the dignity of each person. We know however that without sincere love and disinterest, justice cannot assure peace for the world. True peace blooms when hatred, rancor and envy are vanquished in our hearts; when we say no to selfishness and to everything that causes man to retreat within himself and to defend his own interest."

He went on to say that if love "is translated into gestures of free and disinterested service, into words of understanding and forgiveness, the peaceful wave of love will grow and extend even to interest the entire

human community. In this way it is easier to understand the fourth pillar of peace, that is, liberty, the recognition of the rights of individuals and peoples and the free gift of self in the responsible fulfillment of the duties that correspond to all in their state in life."

"If you try to follow this way," concluded John Paul II, "you will be able to offer an effective contribution to the construction of a 'peaceful' and 'reconciling' world. Your holy Founder, St. Josemaria Escriva, writes: 'The task for a Christian is to drown evil in an abundance of good. It is not a question of negative campaigns, or of being against something. On the contrary, we should live positively, full of optimism, with youthfulness, joy and peace. We should be understanding with everybody.'"

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