

Sampling of papal quotes about or addressed to United Nations

VATICAN CITY - The following are papal quotes about the United Nations or addressed to the United Nations, which officially came into existence Oct. 24, 1945.

- - -

Pope Pius XII, Christmas Eve address to the Roman Curia, Dec. 24, 1945:

"With an abundance of experience, good will, political wisdom and organizational power, at a level never seen before, preparations have begun for an organization dedicated to world peace. Never before have public leaders found themselves before an undertaking so vast and complex because of the number, importance and difficulty of the questions to be resolved nor so serious for the breadth and depth of its effects for the good or bad, such as giving back to humanity - after three decades of world wars, economic catastrophes and excessive impoverishment - order, peace and prosperity. Noble and formidable is the responsibility of those who are preparing to carry forward such a gigantic work."

- - -

Pope John XXIII, encyclical "Pacem in Terris" ("Peace on Earth"), April 11, 1963:

"The United Nations organization has the special aim of maintaining and strengthening peace between nations and of encouraging and assisting friendly relations between them, based on the principles of equality, mutual respect and extensive cooperation in every field of human endeavor. ... It is therefore our earnest wish that the United Nations organization may be able progressively to adapt its structure and methods of operation to the magnitude and nobility of its tasks. May the day be not long delayed when every human being can find in this organization an effective safeguard of his personal rights, those rights, that is, which derive directly from his dignity as a human person, and which are therefore universal, inviolable and inalienable."

- - -

Pope Paul VI, address to the U.N. General Assembly, Oct. 4, 1965:

“Listen to the lucid words of the great departed John Kennedy, who proclaimed four years ago, ‘Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind.’ Many words are not needed to proclaim this loftiest aim of your institution. It suffices to remember that the blood of millions of men, that numberless and unheard-of sufferings, useless slaughter and frightful ruin, are the sanction of the pact which unites you, with an oath which must change the future history of the world: No more war, war never again! Peace, it is peace which must guide the destinies of people and of all mankind.”

- - -

Pope John Paul II, address to the U.N. General Assembly, Oct. 2, 1979:

“The Universal Declaration of Human Rights – with its train of many declarations and conventions on highly important aspects of human rights, in favor of children, of women, of equality between races, and especially the two international covenants on economic, social and cultural rights and on civil and political rights – must remain the basic value in the United Nations organization with which the consciences of its members must be confronted and from which they must draw continual inspiration. If the truths and principles contained in this document were to be forgotten or ignored and were thus to lose the genuine self-evidence that distinguished them at the time they were brought painfully to birth, then the noble purpose of the United Nations organization could be faced with the threat of a new destruction.”

- - -

Pope John Paul, address to the U.N. General Assembly, Oct. 5, 1995:

“The United Nations organization needs to rise more and more above the cold status of an administrative institution and to become a moral center where all the nations of the world feel at home and develop a shared awareness of being, as it were, a ‘family of nations.’ The idea of ‘family’ immediately evokes something more than simple functional relations or a mere convergence of interests. The family is by nature a community based on mutual trust, mutual support and sincere respect. In an authentic family the strong do not dominate; instead, the weaker members, because of their very weakness, are all the more welcomed and served.”

- - -

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, speaking to reporters in Trieste, Italy, about why he believed the United States should not act unilaterally in invading Iraq, Sept. 20, 2002:

“The United Nations exists. It must make the decisive choice. ... It is necessary that the community of peoples and not an individual power make the decision. And the fact that the United Nations is trying to avoid war seems to me to demonstrate with sufficient evidence that the damage which would result would be greater than the values trying to be saved. ... The United Nations is the instrument created after the (Second World) War for a moral coordination of politics.”

- - -

Pope Benedict, speech to diplomats accredited to the Holy See, Jan. 9, 2006:

“Surely one of the great goals of diplomacy must be that of leading all parties in conflict to understand that, if they are committed to truth, they must acknowledge errors – and not merely the errors of others – nor can they refuse to open themselves to forgiveness, both requested and granted. Commitment to truth – which is certainly close to their hearts – summons them, through forgiveness, to peace. Bloodshed does not cry out for revenge but begs for respect for life, for peace. May the peace-building commission recently established by the United Nations organization respond effectively to this basic demand of mankind, with the willing cooperation of all concerned.”

- - -

Pope Benedict, message for World Peace Day, Jan. 1, 2007:

“The protection of human rights is constantly referred to by international bodies and, in particular, the United Nations organization, which set itself the fundamental task of promoting the human rights indicated in the 1948 Universal Declaration. That declaration is regarded as a sort of moral commitment assumed by all mankind. There is a profound truth to this, especially if the rights described in the declaration are held to be based not simply on the decisions of the assembly that approved them, but on man’s very nature and his inalienable dignity as a person created by God. Consequently it is important for international agencies not to lose sight of the

natural foundation of human rights.”

- - -

Pope Benedict, speech to Catholic-inspired nongovernmental organizations, Dec. 1, 2007:

“International cooperation between governments ... has significantly contributed to the creation of a more just international order. In this regard, we can look with satisfaction to achievements such as the universal recognition of the juridical and political primacy of human rights, the adoption of shared goals regarding the full enjoyment of economic and social rights by all the earth’s inhabitants, the efforts being made to develop a just global economy and, more recently, the protection of the environment and the promotion of intercultural dialogue. At the same time, international discussions often seem marked by a relativistic logic which would consider as the sole guarantee of peaceful coexistence between peoples a refusal to admit the truth about man and his dignity, to say nothing of the possibility of an ethics based on recognition of the natural moral law. This has led, in effect, to the imposition of a notion of law and politics which ultimately makes consensus between states – a consensus conditioned at times by short-term interests or manipulated by ideological pressure – the only real basis of international norms.”

- - -

Pope Benedict, address to diplomats accredited to the Holy See, Jan. 7, 2008:

“Our society has rightly enshrined the greatness and dignity of the human person in various declarations of rights, formulated in the wake of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted exactly 60 years ago. That solemn act, in the words of Pope Paul VI, was one of the greatest achievements of the United Nations. ... The Holy See for its part never tires of reaffirming these principles and rights, founded on what is essential and permanent in the human person. ... And on the basis of these considerations, I cannot but deplore once again the continual attacks perpetrated on every continent against human life. I would like to recall, together with many men and women dedicated to research and science, that the new frontiers reached in bioethics do not require us to choose between science and morality: Rather, they oblige us to a moral use of science. On the other hand,

recalling the appeal made by Pope John Paul II on the occasion of the Jubilee Year 2000, I rejoice that on Dec. 18 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution calling upon states to institute a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, and I earnestly hope that this initiative will lead to public debate on the sacred character of human life.”