
THE NOBEL LECTURE GIVEN BY THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LAUREATE 1996*

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Your Majesty. Dear Members of the Norwegian Noble Committee. Honorable Prime Minister. Excellencies, Ministers. Members of Parliament. Members of the Diplomatic Corps. Regarded Friends. Distinguished Guests. Friends. Ladies, and Gentlemen.

"Nations will proclaim his wisdom, the assembly will celebrate his praises. If he lives long, his name will be more glorious than a thousand others, and if he dies, that will satisfy his rest as well" (Wisdom 39, 10-11)

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I start with this biblical passage from the Book of Wisdom because it expresses with deep significance the memory of the man we remember this day whose esteemed Peace Prize bears his name. Today, the tenth of December, we celebrate the centennial anniversary of the death of a wise benefactor of humanity, a Peace worker, Alfred Nobel.

Men of competence will never be extinguished from the memory of humanity because his wisdom, his dedication for the improvement of humanity, his tenacity for the progress of science in favor of mankind, makes people everywhere, all believers, all ideologies, feel in one way or another under the obligation of his talents and his boldness.

These men of competence are constantly disturbing the consciences of those who do not attend to the improvement of humanity. For it is a matter of fact that everyone should contribute by any kind or form so that mankind becomes more and more humane.

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What reasons brought the Catholic Bishop of East Timor to be here in the presence of this assembly? I come from a social context that is already known to your Excellencies, where, due to circumstances, the aspirations and desires of the people are limited.

Taking words from Terentius: *"Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto"* (Terentius 1,1,25).

As man, as human being, I cannot stay indifferent in front of what concerns man.

As a member of the people, I have to share the destiny of the people, taking upon myself completely this mandate, knowing the risks that such an attitude will involve. Striving for the defense of the rights of all peoples is not only the privilege of those guiding the destiny of the people or those enjoying lofty positions in society, but it is the duty of everyone, whatever rank or status.

As a member of the Church, I take upon myself the mission of enlightening [people] and denouncing all human situations which are in disagreement with the Christian concept and contrary to the teaching of the Church concerning all mankind.

The Catholic Bishop is a pastor of a part of God's people. His specific mission is spiritual. Such a mission is incumbent upon him basically as a dispenser of spiritual resources for the salvation of persons and to consolidate them in faith in Jesus Christ.

But mankind is not limited to a spiritual dimension; one should be saved as a whole, human and spiritual. In this aspect, any Catholic Bishop shall never be indifferent when a people's possibilities for human realization, in all dimensions, are not respected.

So the Nobel Peace Prize, attributed to a Catholic Bishop, is not an homage for one person but also basically [represents] gratitude for the encouragement that the Catholic Church has developed over the centuries in defense and promotion of the rights of human beings.

The teachings of the Second Vatican Council in *Gaundiam et Spes*, states: *"The Church thinks that she will respond to the deep desires of the peoples, showing its final hope, preaching freedom, dignity of conscience and rights, that is just, in God's plan of salvation."*

The duty given to the Church is not socio-political in nature but religious. And thus it is characteristic of the Church, a wellspring of enlightenment and energy, to empower and contribute to the strengthening of the human society.

It is known to your Excellencies, the effort of the Church concerning the suffering of the people of East Timor over the last twenty-one years. As Bishop of this people, I regard the Nobel Peace Prize not as something merely to esteem one person but as the rightful homage for the work done by the Catholic Church in East Timor, defending the unalienable rights of her people.

"Yet you have made him a little less than a god, you have crowned him with glory and beauty." (Psalm 8,6).

For the composer of this Psalm, human dignity is taking root in his divine vocation, created by God.

However, addressing this distinguished Assembly with beliefs and concepts about mankind may be quite humanistic. But I do believe for sure that among us we have something in common, that is that the human being is the subject of all concepts and human activities. We declare that one's value and dignity does not depend on the individual's beliefs, religion, politics, philosophy, race, or color of skin.

Man is a being of freedom. This means that a person's realization is complete when one is capable to decide about one's options and to take responsibility for his or her own actions without any kind of intimidation.

Man is a being realized in a community. This means that the social and ethnic group one belongs to is the background for his or her fulfillment.

Man is a being realized when there is a reciprocity of respect. This means that wherever human beings are not respected in their elementary rights by those in charge or by those responsible in society, as a consequence, we have oppression, slavery, arrogance, arbitrariness, deaths of individuals, and the death of a people.

Ladies and gentlemen, these principles are valid for everybody, and they are valid for the Church who also affirms that human dignity is rooted and fulfilled by God Himself.

Persons have been placed in society by God the Creator, but over and above this, each person is called to be united with Him as a child of God, participating in God's happiness.

Moreover, the Church teaches that if this divine foundation and the hope for eternal life are missing, human dignity is strongly damaged (GS.21).

The Catholic Church proclaims Jesus Christ as the great deliverer for all mankind. Indeed, Jesus frees each one from every moral and social slavery, giving back his or her true dignity as a human being.

In making Christ known, the Church reveals to all their true situation and calling, since Christ is the head and model of that renewed humanity imbued with that fraternal love, sincerity, and spirit of peace, to which everyone aspires (AG.8).

Your majesty, Members of the Nobel Committee, my friends from around the world, I am profoundly honored to be before you today to receive the Nobel Prize for Peace. But whatever personal compliment I receive, I believe that I have received this high tribute not because of who I am or what I have done. I firmly believe that I am here essentially as the voice of the voiceless people of East Timor who are with me today in spirit, if not in person. And what the people want is peace, an end to violence, and respect for their human rights. It is my fervent hope that the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize will advance these goals.

Above all, above all else, I am mindful and humble in my thoughts of Pope John Paul II, who did so much in the face of the overwhelming odds in the epochal struggle to remove the yoke of Communism from Poland and other nations that have been told to be realistic and accept their fate. The Holy Father has provided an example and a depth of inspiration to me that can never be equaled. My gratitude to John Paul II cannot be adequately expressed.

I also think of others, especially from Asia who have never stood here. I contemplate with unending amazement the work of Mahatma Gandhi and his creed of non-violence in the movement for change. I think of China, and I pray for the well being of Mr. Wei Jing Sheng and his colleagues, and hope that they will soon be liberated from their jail cells, just as Indonesian leaders once were freed from the infamous Boven Digul prison after long years of cruel captivity. Surely, these same Indonesian leaders earned a place here in Oslo even before I was born in 1948, at the height of their battle for freedom and dignity. I think of the fearless Indonesian fighters, and I realize that history has so much to teach us if we would only take time to contemplate its richness.

I stand humbled in the august presence of my predecessors in this place here in Oslo. I think of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "standing on the mountain top, looking out at the promised land." These words remind me of the view of the majestic mountains in my beloved East Timor—Mount Matabean (the Mountain of the Dead), near where I was born in the east; and Mount Ramelau in the west. As I look at these mountains in my frequent journeys through my native land, I feel ever more strongly that it is high time that the guns of war are silenced in East Timor, once and forever, it is high time that tranquillity is returned to the lives of the people of my homeland, it is high time that there be authentic dialogue. All people of good will must use every peaceful means [employing their] human ingenuity and intelligence to find ways to create genuine peace based on mutual respect and human dignity.

East Timor is hardly alone in its search for peace and dignity, and it is of great importance to acknowledge the work of others. Last year I was privileged to be the guest in Belfast Northern Ireland, of the 1976 co-Laureate, Mrs. Mairead Corrigan Maguire, whose increasing work for peace has touched many throughout the world. Mrs. Maguire graciously gave me an informative and moving tour of the troubled areas of Belfast, the night after many vehicles had been burnt in protest over the early release of a soldier convicted of killing and eighteen-year-old girl. I pray that the people of Northern Ireland may know genuine peace, justice, and tranquillity in the near future.

Last year I met with His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, and was deeply moved by his wisdom and kindness. The people of Tibet are never far from my prayers, nor are the communities of the indigenous peoples of the world who are increasingly being overwhelmed by aggressive modernity that presumes to call itself civilization.

I pray for peace in the Middle East and Afghanistan, which cannot be forgotten, and for the continuation of the peace process in Central America. And no human being can be indifferent to the drama in the Great Lakes area, in Burundi and Rwanda, and also Zaire, where the human suffering cries out for a solution.

In South Africa, the search for peace deepens. For me the work of Archbishop Desmond Tutu is a shining example of the way truth can be combined with the quest for human rights, the way to humor and humility can be mixed with righteousness, and I only pray that I may be worthy of his mantle. In Burma, I salute the strength and grace of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and pray that a better day may soon arrive for her and all her people. May the beauty of music from her piano soften the hearts of armies and nations. In Burma and throughout the world, in places known and not well known, let

us apply the words in the fifth chapter of Amos of the Old Testament: "Let justice roll down like waters."

And let us always think of the many anonymous people throughout the world, struggling for the protection of human rights. Day by day, working to convince the international community of the justice to their cause, whether they be Moslems or Christians, Protestants or Catholics, Hindus or Buddhists, whether they be followers of age-old traditional beliefs, believers or non-believers. I say: press on, take courage, remain true to your ideals, you will not be forgotten.

The world censures those who take up arms to defend their causes and calls on them to use non-violent means in voicing their grievances. But when people choose the non-violent path, it is all too often the case that no one pays attention. It is tragic that people have to suffer and die and the television cameras have to deliver the pictures to peoples' homes every day before the world at large admits that there is a problem. Therein lies the enormous significance and the brave wisdom of the decision of the Nobel Committee to focus on East Timor this year; it represents the extraordinary recognition of East Timor's quest for peace and the recognition of its pleas for an end to suffering.

I speak of these things as one who has the responsibility to bear witness to what I have seen and heard, to react to what I know to be true, to keep the flame of hope alive, to do what is possible to warm the earth for still another day. I speak as a spiritual leader, not as a politician, which in fact, I am not. In recent weeks, some articles have described me as "a former shepherd," not realizing that my vocation evolved from a boyhood job of tending water buffaloes to the grave responsibility of trying to apply my fallible self to the difficult task of providing moral leadership in a situation where almost no one is ever completely happy with my actions.

Others have written that if there had not been a war in East Timor, I would be spending all my time tending to the needs of troubled youth, which is the special calling of my religious order, The Salesians of St. John Bosco. But this is only a matter of degree; even now, I spend an overwhelming amount of energy in listening to and counseling the youth of East Timor, who urgently need such help because of their history. This is my special obligation and one which I welcome.

Thus I must press on, aware of all the tasks that are far from complete. St. John Bosco once said that we will have the chance to rest in the hereafter, not in this world. And my life in the past thirteen years since I took up the post in East Timor illustrates the accuracy of Don Bosco's judgment in this regard among others. But my own hard work forms only a small part of what is necessary; the participation of others is vital. I extend the hand of friendship and goodwill to all those who provide genuine assistance or moral support in the vital struggle for peace in East Timor, throughout Asia, Africa, in the western hemisphere, throughout Europe, in Bosnia, and elsewhere in the Balkans. Everywhere.

I must also praise the United Nations for its painstaking efforts on the question of East Timor, which has been of equal importance in keeping the issue alive over many long years. In the face of great obstacles, in spite of all difficulties, the United Nations have continued to persevere in the interest of generating dialogue that might one day

create a lasting structure of peace in East Timor, and in many other places throughout the world.

There is no institution that can take the place of the United Nations, especially in the light of the history and credibility of the world generation. We cannot overlook the fact that the United Nations played an important role from its earliest days in the 1940's in assisting in the struggle of Indonesia's nationalist movement. The young Indonesian Republic fought alone, with supreme courage, against the brute force of colonialism and its allies, ultimately receiving the indispensable moral backing that the new world association alone was able to provide. In the face of the moral weight of the United Nations, the Dutch and their allies could not carry on the military operations with impunity, as other colonial powers did before the UN was formed in 1945. This must never be forgotten. Thus, the world must do whatever possible to strengthen the United Nations in the months and years ahead, in the deepest interest of all the peoples of the world.

Let it be stated clearly that to make peace a reality, we must be flexible as well as wise. We must truly recognize our own faults and move to change ourselves in the interest of making peace. I am no exception to this rule! Let us banish anger and hostility, vengeance and other dark emotions, and transform ourselves into humble instruments of peace.

People in East Timor are not uncompromising. They are not unwilling to forgive and overcome their bitterness. On the contrary, they yearn for peace, peace within their community and peace in their religion. They wish to build bridges with their Indonesian brothers and sisters to find ways of creating harmony and tolerance.

Mutual respect is the basis of all compromise. Let us start by making a sincere effort to change the very serious human rights situation in East Timor. The Church has played its part. We have formed a Justice and Peace Commission that is always ready to cooperate with the authorities to address problems.

Independent human rights officials have repeatedly visited East Timor and have recommended what needs to be done. As a first step, the release of East Timor political prisoners has to be given urgent attention, in accordance with the section on Humanitarianism in the Panca Sila, The Five Principles of Indonesia's State Ideology. Such a step would help create an important opening in the road to peace.

Ladies and gentlemen, I take the liberty to remind this assembly of my predecessor's appeal, [the appeal of] Israel's former Prime Minister, the late Mr. Itzaak Rabin. Speaking in New York, when the first historical meeting with President Arafat took place, he said: "*Stop bloodshed.*"

Making mine the same appeal, I say: "*Stop bloodshed.*" And I add: Stop oppression. Stop violence. Stop conflict. Let us sit down around a table and understand each other, because we cannot tolerate extending for a long time the suffering of the people of East Timor. I think that this is the fundamental intention of the Nobel Committee in awarding to us the prize, expressed on the behalf of its president, Mr. Francis Sejersted.

Ladies and gentlemen, East Timor was given the possibility to be heard through the voices of her two sons resounding throughout the world through this solemn assembly;

but I would like that this attention shown by the world to East Timor be [granted with] the same intensity to the many other problems distressing other people.

There are similar situations throughout the world where people live under horrible conditions as in Timor, but they have no possibility to be heard.

Daily, we get in our home news and images of the suffering, pain, and destruction caused by war. *"War, this monster,"* as Father Vieira states, *"what is it doing, even God is not secure in the altar."*

I appeal to all men of goodwill and particularly those holding power to find out solutions for those numberless conflicts. Solutions based on justice and solidarity, in order that fundamental rights would be respected.

I appeal, as well, to all professionals of the information media, charged with this great mission, that they regulate communication between all latitudes of the globe, doing it with a sense of truth and immunity for building up a society more humane and just, without tendentious manipulations.

I would like, before I finish, to address one word to the youth around the world, particularly to the youth of my dear Timor: "Society is a succession of interwoven rings in which each generation has the duty to contribute to the next generation in order to live in the world peacefully fraternally. Under your shoulders, dear young people of the entire world, weigh the responsibility to transform tomorrow's world into a society where peace, harmony and fraternity reign."

Dear youth, I quote from memory the great Indian poet Rabindranat Tagore: *"Youth, as a Lotus flower, flourish[es] just once in life."* Do not let it wither through the way.

Finally, an event is never a lonely action. The awarding of the Nobel Prize to these two sons of Timor, Dr. Jose Ramos and myself, has come about because many people, groups, and institutions have worked hard so that this event [would become] a reality.

In this moment I would like, in the first place, to thank Her Majesty the Royalty of Norway, for being susceptible to the suffering of the people of east Timor, and for her generous presence in this solemn assembly.

My thanks go to the Nobel Prize Committee for their kind attention and courageous dedication on the behalf of the plight of the East Timorese.

To the government and members of the Norwegian Parliament I thank you for the decision to honor us with the Noble Peace Prize.

I emphasize a little my thanks to Portugal and other friendly nations, as well as distinguished personalities who have proposed our names as candidates for the Nobel Peace Prize.

To the Timorese, here and abroad, I convey my indescribable gratitude and my communion and silent solidarity with you.

To His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, who has been persistent and attentive in following the situation and the suffering of the people and the Church of East Timor, I submit my final devotion and the promise of unending fidelity and in union with Christ.

To the Pontifical Commission of Justice and Peace, particularly in the person of its President, His Eminence Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, who had the opportunity to be in direct contact with the Church of Timor, I submit my deep gratitude.

I cannot forget the contribution of friends and other religions who, with discretion and fearless activity, have made it possible that the Nobel Peace Prize for 1996 be attributed to the Catholic Church in East Timor.

It would be unjust to forget, although I am aware that it is difficult to count the various Non-Government Organizations, Humanitarian Groups, Church-related Groups, and individuals who have worked hard, in silence and without much publicity, so that the Timorese can receive assistance and so that the Timorese issue would not be buried under the dust of oblivion. With them, I share my happiness.

And finally, my sincere thanks to all the members of the social communication industry from all over the world. They lent their voice in making known to the world the anguish and suffering of all the Timorese. I would like to pay my tribute to those giving information about Timor, risking their [lives] and some of them falling down in East Timor soil.

"The Creator and Father of everything and all peoples will reward all of us and will give us strength, wisdom, and courage to struggle for our fellow human beings because each one is the image and the likeness of God" (Gen. 1,26).