



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
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**Award Ceremony of the  
Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize  
UNESCO, 21 September 2004**

**Address by Mr Jean Foyer  
Vice-President of the Jury**

Mr Director-General,  
Distinguished Presidents,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Jury of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize has awarded the 2003 Prize jointly to two major religious figures. It has wished in this way to acknowledge the part that the main religions have played in seeking peace in our time. Admittedly, in the past, religious clashes were unfortunately numerous. "The dread spectre of those wars of religion," as Pope John Paul II put it, "have so often bloodied human history", and today these tragedies have not entirely disappeared. We see conflicting observance of the same faith, and we still see some people daring to put forward religious pretexts for the most cruel and terrible atrocities. But these are, after all, vestiges of attitudes from another age. To the modern mind there are no holy wars, and the expression "war of religion" has now become oxymoronic in our eyes.

Faced with the horrors of present-day conflicts across the globe, the erosion of an international law that laid down the principle of the distinction between combatants and non-combatants and required the latter to be protected, and the appearance and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction that modern science and technology have made it possible to build, the mind revolts and clashes between religions have been succeeded by interfaith dialogue. We must, of course, understand the exact meaning of this term: such dialogue must be pursued without misunderstandings and with mutual respect while each party maintains its own beliefs resolutely and in full.

Nevertheless, rapprochements are possible, enabling shared beliefs to be examined and practical conclusions drawn. Between monotheistic religions, agreement can and, indeed, has been reached concerning belief in one personal god, the belief that this god is a god of peace and that people have a sacred duty to work for the advent of a reign of justice, love and peace. The name of God, the one god, can become increasingly what it is: a name of peace and a summons to peace. It is because two distinguished figures have appeared to us representative

of such a notable and happy change that I have the honour this evening of delivering an encomium for His Eminence Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and His Excellency Dr Mustafa Ceri , Grand Mufti of Bosnia and President of the Council of Ulema in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Cardinal,

You were born in Espelette in the Basque country, and from the Basques you have an unshakeable and infectious faith and quite exceptional diplomatic gifts. Having taken holy orders, you continued your religious studies to university level and are now a jurist and doctor in canon law of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. You have, moreover, received honorary doctorates from a number of European and American universities and are a member of the *Institut de France* in the *Académie des Sciences morales et politiques*. You were destined for important and delicate missions, since, right from the start of your career, you have borne the heaviest of responsibilities and discharged them one after the other with remarkable skill and talent.

As a very young man you became Vicar-General of the Bishop of Bayonne, in your home diocese, before going on to be first Deputy Secretary-General and then Secretary-General of the French Conference of Bishops, and it was in this capacity that, over 40 years ago now, I had the honour of making your acquaintance when I myself was Minister of Justice. And while you were discharging your duties as Secretary-General you were appointed Assistant Bishop of Paris. You did not remain so for long, since you were very soon assigned the office of Archbishop of Marseilles, one of the most densely populated archbishoprics in France, undoubtedly one of the most difficult, and, to say the least, extremely pluralist in terms of faith.

And while you were presiding over your church in Marseilles you became President of the Conference of Bishops of which you had been Secretary-General, as well as President of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences that you set up and which was called, at least at the time, "purple Europe". In 1979, at the very beginning of his pontificate, Pope John Paul II appointed you Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church. You remained Archbishop of Marseilles a further five years before being summoned to Rome as Cardinal of the Curia. And that is where your impressive international career and your work for peace began.

The last three popes have been haunted by the fear of war and violence, and Pope John Paul II has carried this preoccupation furthest. Pope Paul VI exclaimed when addressing the United Nations General Assembly: "No more war!" His successor wrote that the Church was the mouthpiece of humanity in the pure state, a humanity that longed for peace and needed peace. Two types of office were then conferred on you when you became president of two pontifical councils: the Pontifical Council "*Cor Unum*" and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. The "*Cor Unum*" Council urges believers to show evangelical charity, coordinates charity work, is instrumental in better distribution of aid for the poor throughout the world and can even grant specific aid. You were thus the Holy See's Minister for Cooperation. As to the Council for Justice and Peace, it basically has a research, advisory and advocacy role; it is responsible for promoting justice and peace and, if I may say so, promoting peace through justice: "the work of righteousness shall be peace" according to the gospel and Church doctrine regarding social relations, development of peoples, human rights, the arms trade and disarmament. It is entrusted with the task of documentation, discussion, information and

training, which it carries out, where appropriate, in collaboration with bishops' conferences and international associations, Catholic or otherwise.

This Council has produced a great many quality publications. I cannot cite them all here, but I shall name one of the most famous: it is the document for better land distribution that bears your signature and is aimed particularly at Latin America.

At the time when you were presiding over this work on doctrine you were assigned active duties - indeed, I might say, very active duties. Not only did you attend synods and represent the Holy See in synods held away from Rome, but you also attended international conferences, were president of the Central Committee for the Jubilee of the Year 2000 and frequently travelled across the world, since you went to China no less than four times. But what earned you international recognition and gratitude were your missions to all the world's trouble spots, and the list is long. You were sent on missions to Iran, Iraq, the Near East and the Holy Land, Lebanon, Mozambique, Angola, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, South Africa, Namibia, Cuba, Haiti, Central America, Vietnam, Myanmar, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Liberia, Rwanda, Burundi and Timor-Leste. In Iraq you did your utmost to stop an unfortunate military intervention.

You accomplished such difficult and remarkable missions barehanded, so to speak, since you had no armed forces or threats of economic sanctions to recall nations and governments to peace. Your task was one of conviction and persuasion, and I believe it would be a good idea for the story of these missions to be set down in detail. You have, moreover, already outlined them yourself, portraying yourself as the Pope's envoy "whose only mission, which is spiritual, is to proclaim the Good News of Peace, Love and Mercy that was first proclaimed, after the Prophets, by Christ in this Holy Land, in this Holy City of Jerusalem". You have also said that it is conscience that will have the last word, stronger than any strategy and even any religion, and that peace is only built with the stones of a true dialogue. Yes, if we were to sum up the whole of your contribution both to doctrine and - diplomatically, so to speak - to peace, we should say that not only do you deserve the title of envoy but to describe you accurately we should call you an apostle. Besides, of whom can we say, if not of Your Eminence, what the liturgy says of the apostles: *In omnem terram exivit sonus eorum* ("Their voice has gone forth to all the earth"). You are an apostle who has faith in God and ultimate confidence in the human conscience.

Grand Mufti,

The homage paid to your fellow prizewinner Cardinal Etchegaray might equally apply to you. Born in Visoko in Bosnia, you are first and foremost a university theologian. You studied at the madrasa of Sarajevo before going on to become a student and graduate of the prestigious Al-Azhar University in Cairo, and you continued your Islamic theological studies at the University of Chicago. From this university you received a doctorate in philosophy after defending a thesis on the history of theology published in English and entitled *Roots of Synthetic Theology in Islam: A Study of the Theology of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi*. But by then you had already been appointed Imam at the Islamic Cultural Centre in Chicago and lecturer at the American Islamic College in the same city. Returning to the Old World, you became Grand Imam and Director of the Islamic Centre in Zagreb, lecturer at the Faculty of Islamic Theology in Sarajevo, and associate and then full professor at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization in Kuala Lumpur.

During this period you produced numerous publications from your teaching, and you have an extensive bibliography. You have published no fewer than 15 works on theology, theological history, ethics and politics. These works have all been published in the Bosnian language, and it would be very desirable for the French to become acquainted with them in translation.

Your ethical works, I must emphasize, show you to be a defender of life - both life beginning and life drawing to a close - and regarding fundamental and much-debated issues of our day, such as the status of the unborn child, we see a remarkable concurrence between Muslim ethics and the teachings of Roman Catholicism. Nor are your political works any less significant, dealing as they do with contemporary spiritual movements in the Islamic world, authority within Islam, Islam between religion and nation, and the great theme of religion, nation and homeland.

Today you are the leading moral authority in your country, and your thought has become influential throughout the Muslim world. In 1993 you were elected to the office of Grand Mufti of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina and President of the Council of Ulema. You have accomplished a number of diplomatic missions for your country; in your capacity as a spiritual leader you have participated in numerous official delegations from Bosnia to governments abroad. During the tragic events that left their mark on your country in the 1990s and during which your community endured great suffering, you kept up the morale of your fellow citizens and preached reconciliation, forgiveness and tolerance. You have constantly spoken out for peace in many international conferences and acted in many international meetings and associations that I am afraid are too numerous to name. You are a founding member of the European Council of Religious Leaders established in Oslo in 2002, and you are honorary president of the World Conference of Religions for Peace.

You took the floor at the world meeting of religious leaders for peace held at United Nations Headquarters and, as a religious member of the Council of 100 Leaders, you made noteworthy speeches at two sessions of the World Economic Forum in Davos. You recently spoke on the subject of racism, xenophobia and discrimination at the Vienna Conference of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, not to speak of your participation in numerous UNESCO activities and the structure for interfaith dialogue that you have organized.

You are respected and admired for your broad-mindedness and tolerance, your freedom of speech and the courage with which you affirm your beliefs. Who would not subscribe to your powerful words? You have said and written: "Those who commit crimes in the name of religion forget that committing a crime in the name of God is a crime against God and against religion".

And stressing the benefits of the interfaith dialogue that has been successfully opened you boldly declared: "I believe that the future of our planet depends on peaceful relations between these three religions. These three religions are those of the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims, the point being that Jews, Christians and Muslims have the greatest responsibility in shaping the future since they command weapons capable of destroying the planet", and you concluded by saying, therefore: "God help us, with the love of Jesus, the justice of Moses and the faith of Abraham, not to commit the sin of Adam". I shall add just one observation: what fine theology!