



# **General Assembly Manila 2011**

## **Intervention of the Ecclesiastical Assistant**

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**Pastoral Letter of the German Bishops**  
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# **Terrorism As Ethical Challenge**

human dignity and human rights



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# 1. Human dignity and human rights – basis of the fight against terrorism

- A state's prior task: protection of its citizens
- Essential precondition in the fight against terrorism: respect of human rights and dignity
- 1963 Pope John XXIII. (Encyclica "Pacem in Terris"):
  - Right of the individual is prior ambition of the common welfare
  - Recognition of inalienable and invulnerable human dignity
- This should be the directive for dealing with terrorists and terrorism.



## 2. Prevention before intervention

- Pastoral letter “Just Peace” (2000)  
“Magna Charta” of German catholic peace ethic
- Prevention has to be set as priority
- Use of armed force has to be avoided if possible
  - But specific situations need military measures



### **3. The Law – source of public welfare and peace**

- Respect of law → important for avoiding rule of violence
- Christian view of positive law:
  - Oriented and limited by divine law and human rights
  - Aim is protection of inalienable and invulnerable human dignity and rights
- Law is a key issue for ethics of peace



## **4. Limitation of constitutional actions in the fight against terrorism**

- Certain measures could erode principles of law
- States have to counter terrorism resolutely
  - But without abandoning the principles of rule of law
- Even terrorists have human rights



## 5. Radical infringement of rights: torture

- The prohibition of torture
  - Has to be respected at all times
  - Must not be violated especially by constitutional democracies
- Symbolic relevance for constitutional states
  - States must not condescend to the level of barbarism while fighting against terrorism



## **6. Laws for the fight against terrorism have to be thoroughly analyzed in their effects on fundamental rights**

- 9/11 brought up many safety laws
- Responsibility to protect citizens is a challenge:
  - Fundamental rights have to be respected
  - Inspections must not discriminate and need to respect the human dignity



## 7. International Community

- International terrorism is a challenge for the international community
- Increasing of existing international police cooperation improves
  - The possibilities of violence prevention
  - The prosecution of international terrorists
- The world will become more insecure if the fight against terrorism weakens the international law



## 8. Updating the international law

- International law must be further developed
- State interests are still given priority
  - Individuals should be more in the spotlight
- Responsibility to Protect
  - An important step towards just peace and a life with dignity



## 9. Global justice – precondition for a peaceful world

- Unfair distribution can never be accepted as justification for terrorist attacks
  - Inhuman social circumstances are a breeding ground for terrorism
  - Effective policies against terrorism needs to reduce
    - Poverty
    - Distributive injustice
    - Strained relations between ethnical or religious groups
- This is a task for states, communities, the church and religions



## 10. Interreligious dialogue

- Christianity and Islam have to work on good mutual relations:
  - Distrust and misunderstanding can be answered by contacts between believers
  - Hate and violence to be countered by interreligious dialogue
- Pope John Paul II. shortly after 9/11:
  - Refusing religious or moral legitimization for terrorist attacks
  - Cooperation to eliminate social and cultural reasons for terrorism



**Texts from:**

**Pope Benedict XVI.  
Encyclica „Spe Salvi“**



## Progress in ‚moral affairs‘?

- „Let us ask once again: what may we hope? And what may we not hope? First of all, we must acknowledge that incremental progress is possible only in the material sphere. [...]
- Yet in the field of ethical awareness and moral decision-making, there is no similar possibility of accumulation for the simple reason that man's freedom is always new and he must always make his decisions anew. [...]
- Naturally, new generations can build on the knowledge and experience of those who went before, and they can draw upon the moral treasury of the whole of humanity. But they can also reject it“ (24)



## Not only structures

- “The right state of human affairs, the moral well-being of the world can never be guaranteed simply through structures alone, however good they are. Such structures are not only important, but necessary; yet they cannot and must not marginalize human freedom. Even the best structures function only when the community is animated by convictions capable of motivating people to assent freely to the social order. Freedom requires conviction; conviction does not exist on its own, but must always be gained anew by the community.” (24)



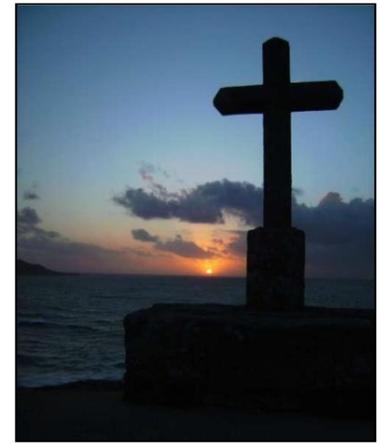
## Every generation → establish good structures

- „What this means is that every generation has the task of engaging anew in the arduous search for the right way to order human affairs; this task is never simply completed. Yet every generation must also make its own contribution to establishing convincing structures of freedom and of good, which can help the following generation as a guideline for the proper use of human freedom; hence, always within human limits, they provide a certain guarantee also for the future. In other words: good structures help, but of themselves they are not enough.“ (25)



## Redeemed by love

- „It is not science that redeems man: man is redeemed by love. This applies even in terms of this present world. When someone has the experience of a great love in his life, this is a moment of “redemption” which gives a new meaning to his life. But soon he will also realize that the love bestowed upon him cannot by itself resolve the question of his life. It is a love that remains fragile. It can be destroyed by death. The human being needs unconditional love.“ (26)



## The Great Hope

- “Let us say once again: we need the greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day. But these are not enough without the great hope, which must surpass everything else. This great hope can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain. The fact that it comes to us as a gift is actually part of hope. God is the foundation of hope: not any god, but the God who has a human face and who has loved us to the end, each one of us and humanity in its entirety.”(31)



**Thank you for your attention!**