



To His Excellency
Mr. William Jefferson Clinton
President of the United States of America

As you can well imagine, expressions of great concern about the war which is waging within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have been addressed to me, and I myself am deeply troubled about the human suffering which is increasing on a dramatic level almost hourly.

From the very beginning of this crisis over a year ago, I have been voicing my solidarity with those who have been the victims of violence which unfortunately seems to come so easy in that part of the world. I was so encouraged by the intensive efforts that the international community undertook in order to stop that senseless spiral of hatred, mistrust and brutality by a political solution that would correspond to the legitimate aspirations of all parties. Certainly, frustration must have been present when that way seemed to have failed and the decision to take another route to impose order must have been taken with the seriousness and deliberation that it requires.

Yet, Mr. President, I wish to beseech you, in these days leading up to Easter, to begin to discuss with your partners the possibility of proclaiming a truce during the week that separates the two celebrations of this most important Feast for the Christian communities of the West (April 4) and the East (April 11). I have asked the same of the President of Yugoslavia. This plea comes so

that the suffering that is being caused by the fighting will be alleviated and that space will be given to resume a dialogue.

No one should feel that this step is an humiliation. Rather it would be a courageous act undertaken for the noble reason of averting an even worse humanitarian disaster and preserving the most precious and sacred reality of life.

I assure you that I am praying to God for you and all the leaders who are guiding this chapter of history at the close of this Millennium. May He grant to all wisdom and courage so that peace, which is never too late to embrace, will once again be established.

While extending to you my most cordial greetings, I wish you a most blessed and happy Easter.

From the Vatican, 1 April 1999



Joannes Paulus II