POPE JOHN PAUL II PRESENTS MOSAIC OF 'DOVE OF PEACE' TO UNITED NATIONS

His Holiness Receives Official Gift and Private Present
from Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim

On the occasion of his official visit to the United Nations, Pope John Paul II this afternoon presented to the United Nations a mosaic of the "Dove of Peace", a reproduction of a mosaic executed in the apse of the old Constantinian Basilica of St. Peter in the pontificate of Innocent III (1198-1216), a Pope noted for his teaching of theology of peace.

Also this afternoon, the Pope received a private gift from Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, as well as an official United Nations gift.

The enamels used in the "Dove of Peace" mosaic presented by the Pope were made in 1727 in the pontificate of Benedict XIII Orsini (1724-1730). The chemical composition of those enamels is a special secret of the Vatican Mosaic Studio, which composed the mosaic. The frame of the mosaic, made in 1796 in the pontificate of Pius VI Braschi (1765-1799), is of gilt bronze.

The President of the Vatican Mosaic Studio, Lino Zanini, writes that the dove, "an ornamental motif rich in meaning, flies with outstretched wings on its untiring way beneath a dark sky charged with menacing clouds, as it anxiously seeks out a bright horizon as a sure refuge of peace".

The private gift of the Secretary-General to His Holiness was an early nineteenth century engraving depicting St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna. It is enclosed in a large rectangular inlaid wooden box.

The official United Nations gift to the Pope, presented by the Secretary-General, is an eight-sided inlaid wooden box containing nine United Nations peace medals in silver. Eight of those peace medals are in a circle surrounding a silver plaque which has the ninth peace medal in the centre, with the engraved signature of the Secretary-General below it.

A small rectangular silver plaque on the inside cover of the box is engraved: "Presented to His Holiness Pope John Paul II by the Secretary-General, Kurt Waldheim, United Nations, 2 October 1979".

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