



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO HIS EXCELLENCY Mr ROLF TROLLE ANDERSEN
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE KINGDOM OF NORWAY
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 29 May 2009

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Norway to the Holy See. I would like to express my gratitude for the good wishes that you bring from King Harald V. Please convey to His Majesty my cordial greetings and assure him of my continued prayers for all the people of your nation. It seems particularly fitting that today's ceremony, an important landmark in our diplomatic relations, should occur at a time when the twentieth anniversary of the historic [visit of Pope John Paul II to the Scandinavian countries](#) is almost upon us.

Not only is your country blessed with a notable degree of prosperity, but it has a most distinguished record in coming to the aid of others less fortunate than itself. In the wake of the financial turmoil of recent months, Norway was swift in offering expert assistance to other countries to help them weather the storm, despite suffering its own share of economic difficulties in consequence of the crisis. In opening its doors to significant numbers of refugees and immigrants, Norway has for many years shown itself to be a generous and welcoming nation. As Your Excellency has observed, the effect of this influx on Norwegian society, and especially on the small Catholic community, has been to introduce far greater cultural and ethnic variety. This in turn has stimulated deeper reflection on the presuppositions and values that govern life in Norway today and its place in the modern world.

"Blessed are the peacemakers." These words of Jesus (Mt 5:9) have been taken very much to heart by Norwegians, whose culture has been strongly shaped by its thousand-year Christian

history. Norway's commitment to peace-keeping is clearly illustrated by its high-level involvement in the United Nations Organization, whose first Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, came from Norway, as do a number of current senior office-holders. The Holy See very much appreciates your country's contribution to conflict resolution in some of the world's most troubled areas. From Sri Lanka to Afghanistan, from Sudan to Somalia, from Chad to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Norway has played its part, whether it be in peace negotiations, in calling upon the parties to observe international law, in humanitarian assistance, in helping with reconstruction and peace-keeping, or in promoting democracy and providing expert advice on building up the social infrastructure. Having just returned from my [Apostolic Visit to the Holy Land](#), I am particularly conscious of the crucial work that your country has done in brokering peace agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. I hope and pray that the spirit of reconciliation and the search for justice which gave rise to the Oslo Accords will eventually prevail and bring lasting peace to the peoples of that tormented region.

In addition to such humanitarian concerns, Norwegians have taken very much to heart the needs of the natural environment, placing particular emphasis on developing renewable sources of energy and attending to the causes and the consequences of climate change. Characteristic of your country's long-term vision for the good of the planet and the welfare of its inhabitants is the initiative of the Global Seed Vault, designed to guarantee the survival of countless varieties of plant life, so that vital food sources in particular can be insured against the possibility of extinction.

In all these activities, your country is motivated by the fundamental ethical values of which Your Excellency has spoken, values that are rooted in Norway's Christian culture, and which, therefore, are central to the perspectives and the goals which it shares with the Holy See. In less than thirty years of diplomatic relations between us, much has been achieved. The close cooperation between the Holy See and the Kingdom of Norway – alongside other nations – in drawing up and ratifying the recent convention banning cluster munitions is a good example. I too look forward to further developing and strengthening our excellent relations in many different fields, with a view to promoting the ethical vision that we share for the sake of building a more humane and just world.

On a domestic level, the Catholic community in Norway, small though it is, is eager to play its part in national life and to make its voice heard in public debate. I mentioned earlier the deeper reflection that is currently taking place on the presuppositions and values governing Norwegian society, and here the Catholic community, with its substantial patrimony of social teaching, has a valuable contribution to offer. Like many European countries today, Norway is increasingly called upon to examine the implications of the right to religious freedom in the context of a liberal and pluralist society. I am confident that the high ethical principles and the generosity so characteristic of Norway's activity on the international scene will also prevail at home, so that all the citizens of your country will be free to practise their religion, and all the different religious communities will be free to order their affairs in accordance with their beliefs and juridical systems, in this way making their particular contribution to the common good.

Your Excellency, in offering my best wishes for the success of your mission, I would like to assure you that the various departments of the Roman Curia are ready to provide help and support in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon Your Excellency, your family and all the people of the Kingdom of Norway, I cordially invoke God's abundant blessings.

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