



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO HER EXCELLENCY BARONES
HENRIETTE JOHANNA CORNELIA MARIA VAN LYNDEN-LEIJTEN
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS
TO THE HOLY SEE***

*Apostolic Palace, Castel Gandolfo
Friday, 2 October 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 the Netherlands to the Holy See. I would like to express my gratitude for the good wishes that you bring from Queen Beatrix. For my part, please convey to Her Majesty my cordial greetings and assure her of my continuing prayers for all the people of your nation.

In a world that is ever more closely interconnected, the Holy See's diplomatic relations with individual states afford many opportunities for cooperation on important global issues. In this light, the Holy See values its links with the Netherlands and looks forward to strengthening them further in years to come. Your country, as a founder member of the European Economic Community and home to several international juridical institutions, has long been at the forefront of moves to strengthen international cooperation for the greater good of the human family. Hence the mission on which you are about to embark is rich in opportunities for joint action to promote peace and prosperity in the light of the desire that both the Holy See and the Netherlands have, to help the human person.

The defence and promotion of freedom is a key element in humanitarian engagement of this kind, and it is one to which both the Holy See and the Kingdom of the Netherlands frequently draw attention. It must be understood, though, that freedom needs to be anchored in truth – the truth of

the nature of the human person – and it needs to be directed towards the good of individuals and of society. In the financial crisis of the past twelve months, the whole world has been able to observe the consequences of exaggerated individualism that tends to favour single-minded pursuit of perceived personal advantage to the exclusion of other goods. There has been much reflection on the need for a sound ethical approach to the processes of economic and political integration, and more people are coming to recognize that globalization needs to be steered towards the goal of integral human development of individuals, communities and peoples – shaped not by mechanical or deterministic forces but by humanitarian values that are open to transcendence (cf. *Caritas in Veritate*, 42). Our world needs to “reappropriate the true meaning of freedom, which is not an intoxication with total autonomy, but a response to the call of being” (*ibid.*, 70). Hence the Holy See’s conviction regarding the irreplaceable role of faith communities in public life and in public debate.

While some of the Dutch population would declare itself agnostic or even atheist, more than half of it professes Christianity, and the growing numbers of immigrants who follow other religious traditions make it more necessary than ever for civil authorities to acknowledge the place of religion in Dutch society. An indication that your Government does so is the fact that faith schools receive state support in your country, and rightly so, since such institutions are called to make a significant contribution to mutual understanding and social cohesion by transmitting the values that are rooted in a transcendent vision of human dignity.

Even more basic than schools in this regard are families built on the foundation of a stable and fruitful marriage between a man and a woman. Nothing can equal or replace the formative value of growing up in a secure family environment, learning to respect and foster the personal dignity of others, acquiring the capacity for “acceptance, encounter and dialogue, disinterested availability, generous service and deep solidarity” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 43; cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 221) – in short, learning to love. A society, on the other hand, which encourages alternative models of domestic life for the sake of a supposed diversity, is likely to store up social consequences that are not conducive to integral human development (cf. *Caritas in Veritate*, 44, 51). The Catholic Church in your country is eager to play its part in supporting and promoting stable family life, as the Dutch Bishops’ Conference stated in its recent document on the pastoral care of young people and the family. It is my earnest hope that the Catholic contribution to ethical debate will be heard and heeded by all sectors of Dutch society, so that the noble culture that has distinguished your country for centuries may continue to be known for its solidarity with the poor and the vulnerable, its promotion of authentic freedom and its respect for the dignity and inestimable value of every human life.

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 the Netherlands, I cordially invoke God’s abundant blessings.

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