



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE *Consistory Hall*

Friday, 20 October 1978 Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am very touched by the words and generous wishes that your spokesman has just addressed to me. I know of the relations full of mutual esteem and trust which had been established between Pope Paul VI and each of the diplomatic representations accredited to the Holy See. This climate was due to the understanding, respectful and benevolent, that this great Pope had of responsibility for the common good of peoples, and above all to the superior ideals that animated him as regards peace and development. My immediate Predecessor, dear Pope John Paul I, receiving you less than two months ago, had initiated similar relations, and each of you still remembers his words full of humility, availability and pastoral judgment, which I make entirely mine. And now today I inherit the same office and you, you express the same trust, with the same enthusiasm. I thank you heartily for the sentiments which, through my person, you thus testify faithfully to the Holy See. In the very first place, may each of you feel that he is cordially welcomed here for his own sake, and for the country, the people that he represents. Yes, if there is a place where all peoples must come into contact in peace, and meet respect, sympathy and a sincere desire for their dignity, their happiness, and their progress, it is at the heart of the Church, around the Apostolic See, which was set up to bear witness to truth and to love of Christ. My esteem and my wishes go, therefore, to one and all of you, in the diversity of your situations. At this meeting, in fact, not only Governments, but also peoples and nations are represented. And among them there are the old "nations", rich in a great past, a fruitful history, a tradition and culture of their own; there are also young nations which have arisen recently, with great possibilities to bring into use, or which are still awakening and being formed. The Church has always wished to participate in the life of peoples and nations and to contribute to their development. The Church has always recognised particular richness in the diversity and plurality of their cultures, their histories, their languages. In many cases the Church has made her specific contribution to the formation of these cultures. The Church has considered, and continues to be of the opinion, that in international relations it is obligatory to respect the rights of each nation. As for me, called from one of these nations to succeed the Apostle Peter in the service of the universal Church and of all nations, I will endeavour to manifest to each one the esteem which it has the right to expect. You must, therefore, echo my fervent wishes within your Governments and among all your fellow countrymen. And here, I must add that the history of my native country has taught me to respect the specific values of each nation, and of each people, its tradition and its rights among other peoples. As a Christian, and even more as Pope, I am, I shall be, a witness to this attitude and to universal love, reserving the same goodwill for everyone, especially those who have suffered. Diplomatic relations mean stable, reciprocal relations, under the sign of politeness, discretion and loyalty. Without confusing competences, they do not necessarily manifest, on my side, approval of such and such a regime—that is not my business. Obviously, neither do they manifest approval of all its acts in the conduct of public affairs. But they show an appreciation of positive temporal values; a desire for dialogue with those who are legitimately charged with the

common good of society; an understanding of their role which is often a difficult one; interest and aid for the human causes they have to promote, sometimes by direct interventions, above all by the formation of consciences, which is a specific contribution to justice and peace on the international plane. By doing so, the Holy See does not want to emerge from its pastoral role. Anxious to put into practice the solicitude of Christ, while preparing the eternal salvation of men which is its first duty, how could it fail to take an interest in the welfare and progress of peoples in this world? On the other hand, the Church and the Holy See in particular ask your nations, your Governments, to take increasingly into consideration a certain number of needs. The Holy See does not seek this for itself. It does so, in union with the local episcopate, for the Christians or believers who inhabit your countries, in order that, without any special privilege but in all justice, they may nourish their faith, ensure religious worship, and be admitted, as loyal citizens, to full participation in social life. The Holy See does so also in the interest of men whoever they may be, knowing that freedom, respect for the life and dignity of persons—who are never instruments— fairness in treatment, professional conscientiousness in work, and a united pursuit of the common good, the spirit of reconciliation, opening to spiritual values, are fundamental requirements of harmonious life in society, and of the progress of citizens and their civilization. Certainly, the last-mentioned goals generally figure on the programme of those responsible. But the result, for all that, cannot be taken for granted, and all means are not equally valid. There are still too many physical and moral miseries which depend on negligence, selfishness, and the blindness or hardness of men. The Church wishes to contribute to diminish these miseries with her peaceful means, by education to the moral sense, by the loyal action of Christians and men of goodwill. Doing so, the Church may sometimes not be understood; but she is convinced that she is rendering a service which mankind cannot do without. She is faithful to her Teacher and Saviour, Jesus Christ. It is in this spirit that I hope to maintain and develop, with all the countries that you represent, cordial and fruitful relationships. I encourage you in your high office and I encourage, above all, your Governments to seek justice and peace more and more, in understandable love for your fellow countrymen, and with your minds and hearts open to other peoples. On this way, may God enlighten you and strengthen you yourselves and all your leaders, and may he bless each of your countries.

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