



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO MEMBERS OF THE PRESIDENCY OFFICE
OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT*5 April 1979 Mr President,**

Gentlemen, I thank you for your visit and I am touched at the importance you thus give to a meeting with the Pope. In the part of Europe which you represent, the laborious construction of greater unity is entering an important phase this year, and elections are being prepared in each of your countries to give the European Parliament members who are elected directly for this purpose by the whole of their fellow-citizens. This consultation is a field in which the Pope intervenes only in the framework of his mission—of a religious and moral nature—among other things to call upon citizens to carry out their electoral duty well; and in that he willingly joins in the exhortations of the other European Bishops. His pastoral concern then beyond the sphere of partisan spiritual needs of hundreds of millions of men who are concerned by this political structure. Every European Member of Parliament tries, of course, to direct this Europe in the direction he considers most favourable to the interest, the progress, and happiness of the peoples. In this he draws inspiration from his experience, his convictions, and the views of his political party. If I have a wish to formulate, it is that each one, going beyond the sphere of partisan spirit or, on the contrary, of resignation by which he may be tempted, will really ask himself, freely, and in conscience, the essential questions: how to have access to a widened brotherhood without losing anything of the precious traditions characteristic of each country or region? How to develop the structures of coordination without reducing responsibility at the base or in the intermediary bodies? How to allow individuals, families, local communities, peoples, to exercise their rights and their duties, while opening themselves up within this European Community and before the rest of the world—in particular the rest of Europe and the most deprived countries—to a wider common good and a greater harmony? The vaster and more complex an organism is, the more vigilance is necessary when it is desired to determine a common line of action. And the more necessary it is also to take into account the real needs of each of the partners, in order to avoid constructing a theoretical structure which would scorn these needs or let itself be guided by the interests of particular groups. Respect for the fundamental rights of the person remains the test. To understand this clearly, one must reflect on the meaning of institutions. Institutions, those of a Europe moving towards unity as well as those of other national or international entities, must always be in the service of man, and not vice versa. The Community institutions are still instruments—indeed important instruments—but they carry out fruitful work only if they put man, the whole man, at the centre of their concerns. Institutions alone will never make Europe, it is men who will make it. Even when seeking, as must be done, everything that will promote the unity of men and at the same time ensure their development, it is always necessary, as I indicated recently, to ask oneself: "Does this progress, which has man for its author and promoter, make human life on earth more human in every aspect of that life? Does it make it more worthy of man?... In the context of this progress is man, as man, becoming truly better, that is to say more mature spiritually, more aware of the dignity of his humanity, more responsible, more open to others, especially the neediest and the

weakest, and readier to give and to aid all?" (cf. *Redemptor Hominis*, 15). It is therefore necessary, first of all, to set in place the moral responsibility that every human being must consciously assume before the challenge of the tasks that are incumbent upon him as citizen of a country, citizen of a region marked by a common history and destiny—and it is possible to speak here of a Christian history as regards Europe—or citizen of the world. Man, strengthened by the sense of his moral responsibility, will be in a position to enter into communion with others; for the destiny of mankind is never played out in isolation but in solidarity, in collaboration, in communion with others, through others, for others, I spoke of strengthening men's moral responsibility. But here the men who are drawing closer already belong to peoples who have their history, their traditions, their rights, and in particular the right to their sovereign identity. It is these peoples who are called to unite more closely. The association, therefore, must never lead to a levelling; on the contrary, it will have to contribute to highlighting the rights and the duties of each people, in respect for their sovereignty, and thus to reach a richer harmony making these nations capable of entering into a relationship with others, with all their values, in particular their moral and spiritual values. Then, too, the partners thus united will not, of course, forget that they do not make up the whole of Europe by themselves. They will remain aware of their joint responsibility for the future of the whole continent; this continent which—beyond its historical divisions, its tensions and its conflicts—has a deep solidarity, to which the same Christian Faith has contributed to a great extent. It is, therefore, the whole of Europe that must benefit from the steps taken today, and also the other continents towards which Europe will be able to turn with its specific originality. Yes, it is a great service, a delicate service, that is entrusted to the European Parliament. I beg the Lord to enlighten you, to assist you, to give you the courage to seek, at all costs, justice and truth, and respect for persons, situations, and peoples.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English* n. 17 p.4. © Copyright 1979 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana