



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND*

Friday, 17 October 1980

Your Majesty,

Your Royal Highness,

NINETEEN YEARS AGO my predecessor John XXIII welcomed Your Majesty and Your Royal Highness to the Vatican. Today this joy and this pleasure belong to me, and it is my desire to greet both of you with the same cordiality and respect that marked the welcome extended by my predecessor.

On that occasion, John XXIII spoke of the great simplicity and dignity with which Your Majesty bears the weight of your many responsibilities. Two decades later, these observations are still so very apt, and it is most evident that the responsibilities incumbent on you have far from diminished. The needs of humanity itself have dramatically increased, as have the problems that confront it in so many vital areas.

In the context of collaboration in our common ideal of service, I am happy to have the opportunity of our meeting in order to speak to you about a number of these issues. Contacts between the Apostolic See of Rome and Great Britain are by no means of recent origin; indeed they span a period of almost fourteen hundred years - back to the days when Gregory I sent Augustine, a Benedictine monk, to bring Christ's Gospel to the people of your land. Other Benedictine influences touched the lives of the people of Britain, and from your shores they spread throughout Europe by means of the activity, for example, of Saint Boniface, one who has been called "the greatest Englishman" and the thirteenth centenary of whose birth is being celebrated this year.

In the person of Your Majesty I render homage to the Christian history of your people, as well as to their cultural achievements. The ideals of freedom and democracy, anchored in your past, remain challenges for every generation of upright citizens in your land. In this century your people have

repeatedly endeavoured to defend these ideals against aggression. It is my prayer that these great benefits will be effectively guaranteed for future generations. The influence of your hardworking people in certain other fields too, and the spread of their language, have been providential instruments for furthering brotherhood throughout the world. May this contribution be realised to the full for the advancement of mankind at this juncture of history, and for the promotion of the integral progress of every man, woman and child in a peaceful world.

Last year, before the United Nations Organisation I had the opportunity to speak of the relationship that exists between genuine development and peace and the cultivation of spiritual values. In this regard I stated: "The pre-eminence of the values of the spirit defines the proper sense of material goods and the way to use them. This pre-eminence is therefore at the basis of a just peace. It is also a contributing factor to ensuring that material development, technical development and the development of civilisation are at the service of what constitutes man"^[1]. In the presence of Your Majesty and Your Royal Highness I express the ardent hope that your noble nation will face this great spiritual challenge with renewed enthusiasm and fresh moral vigour.

During the two decades intervening since the last visit of Your Majesty to the Holy See, one notes with a sense of deep satisfaction an ever more cordial relationship existing between various Christian bodies and between other religious men and women of good will. This is eminently true of the situation in your own land; under God's grace it is owing to the patience and sustained effort of so many honest people moved by the insights of charity and dedicated to a profound conviction that was once expressed by Jesus Christ: "The truth will make you free". Worthy of special mention in this regard is the zeal with which representatives of the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion have pursued this noble goal of drawing closer together in Christian unity and in effective common service to humanity.

With great anticipation I look forward to having the opportunity of making a pastoral visit to the Catholics of Great Britain. On that occasion I hope to meet them both as sons and daughters of the Catholic Church and as loyal citizens of their nation; at the same time I hope to greet with fraternal respect and friendship other fellow Christians and people of good will.

Meanwhile, to Your Majesty and Your Royal Highness I reiterate my personal sentiments of esteem. I ask God to sustain you in all your activities of service and to preserve you in good health. I invoke God's favour upon both of you, together with the entire Royal Family, and the whole British people. May God bless Great Britain, enabling her to fulfil her exalted destiny in justice and in peace.

[1] Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio ad Nationum Unitarum Legatos*, 14, die 2. oct. 1979: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, II, 2 (1979) 532.

*AAS 72 (1980), p.1108-1110.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. III, 2 p. 887-889.

L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English n. 43 p.3.

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