



# The Holy See

---

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II  
TO H. E. MR WILLIAM A. WILSON  
FIRST AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
TO THE HOLY SEE\***

*Monday, 9 April 1984*

*Mr Ambassador,*

it gives me great pleasure, after the recent establishment of diplomatic relations, to welcome you as the First Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Holy See. This is, indeed, as you have stated, an historic moment: the friendly relations that have long existed between the United States and the Holy See are actuated today in a new and special way. Diplomatic ties now formalize, in the way that customarily governs them officially in the international community, a relationship of close collaboration which for many years has already produced fruitful results.

On the part of the Holy See this collaboration means striving earnestly to be of service. It means entering into an extended dialogue on the important issues which are at the basis of civilization itself. It means exerting common efforts to defend human dignity and the rights of the human person - every human person, every man, woman and child on this earth. In this collaboration, the Holy See envisions a useful and respectful exchange of ideas on world peace and development, and on the conditions essential to their attainment, beginning with the need to protect freedom, promote justice, and vindicate truth against every attempted manipulation. And since freedom, justice and truth are related to concrete situations in life, our common concerns must necessarily embrace the global problems of world hunger, the arms race, human misery, the oppression of the weak, the plight of the poor, the condition of refugees, the violation of consciences and the integral development of individuals, communities and nations. All of these points have vital interest for the Government of the United States, as well as for the Catholics of the United States and of the world, because they deeply affect the lives of people - the American people and all the other

peoples of the world - and because of the very special position of the United States on the international scene.

You have pointed out, Mr Ambassador, and rightly so, that in many points the principles on which your Republic was founded closely parallel the principles of the Holy See. Yes, it is a question of religious and human values and moral principles. Certainly the recognition of God and the defense of human dignity, and therefore of human life, are a most precious part of your national heritage. Your Declaration of Independence speaks to the whole world about the "Laws of Nature and of Nature's God", and with great wisdom it recognizes inalienable rights for man. Your Constitution for its part sees the need to "establish justice . . . and secure the blessings of liberty". On the occasion of your Bicentennial, my predecessor Paul VI expressed his deep admiration for the sound basis of American life, and he shared his hope for "a rededication to those moral principles formulated by your Founding Fathers and enshrined forever in your history" (Paolo VI, *Address of the Holy Father Paul VI to a group of representatives of the Congress of the United States*, 26 Apr. 1976: *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, XVI (1976) 288 s.).

Part of the greatness of the American ideal is, without doubt, an openness to other peoples: not in the sense of "foreign entanglements", but in the sense of fraternal concern "for the well-being", as you have stated it, "of our fellowman throughout the world". On this occasion I cannot fail to express my conviction that the condition of today's world depends in great measure on the way the United States exercises her global mission of service to humanity. The United States is eminently fitted for this world task of openness to others by reason of her very internal composition as a nation: *E pluribus unum!* Is America not made up of countless ethnic strains and every race on earth? Does she not contain within herself, in her very citizens, a sensitivity to other peoples: to their cultures, their needs, their aspirations for human dignity and peace?

It is my prayer, Mr Ambassador, that America will not fail to be herself and to renew her identity in fidelity to moral and religious principles, and in service to a world in need of peace and human rights, a world hungry for bread and thirsting for justice and fraternal love. With these sentiments, Mr Ambassador, I ask God to assist you in your mission and I invoke his blessings on the President and all the people of the United States of America.

---

\*AAS 76 (1984), p.720-722.

*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. VII, 1 p. 966-967.

*L'Attività della Santa Sede* 1984 p. 272-274.

*L'Osservatore Romano* 10.4.1984 p.4.

© Copyright 1984 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

---

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana