



The Holy See

*Discours à l'Ambassadeur du CANADA,
S. E. M. Pierre DUMAS**

30 mars 1984

I am delighted to receive your Excellency, and I thank you for the sentiments and cordial good wishes which you have just addressed to me in the name of the Government and the people of Canada. I should like you to express my gratitude to the Authorities your represent, and also my heartfelt wishes for the discharge of their high responsibilities at the service of all their compatriots. I have often had occasion to receive here civilian personalities from your country, in particular the Prime Minister, Mr. Pierre Elliot Trudeau.

You take your place today among the line of Canadian Ambassadors who have succeeded one another here over the past fifteen years, and have greatly honoured your country and earned for it the esteem of the Holy See. The interest which you yourself have shown from the beginning in the establishment of these diplomatic relations gives one to understand that you are well prepared to appreciate their significance and very special importance and that they will be quickly familiar to you. For its part, the Holy See will be happy to know ever better, through your good office, the complex and attractive realities of the life of Canadians and the problems which fall to their leaders. Reciprocally, the Holy See will willingly inform you of the spiritual action and the efforts for peace which it undertakes and offers to the world in conformity with its mission. In many areas these efforts coincide with those of your country for the good of the world community, and I share your hope that in this regard co-operation between Canada and the Holy See will be ever more fruitful

Exchanges with your country are about to become more frequent with the approaching date of my pastoral visit to your country, an event which you pleasingly referred to. It is with joy that I look forward to it too. In terms of what can be managed in ten days, the duration and itinerary seem adequately suited to the virtual continental dimensions of your country and the variety of communities that make up its population. The contacts which I already have had here with numerous Canadians - particularly with bishops and with civilian authorities - added to visits which

I have had occasion to make to your country in order to meet Polish emigrants, have already permitted me to enter into deep empathy with your compatriots. Canada is still a young country with immense potential of every kind, full of dynamic energy and hope, but not without well-established traditions. We express our best wishes for its harmony in diversity, for the maintaining and deepening of the human and Christian values of its heritage for its influence and helpful contribution to the solution of international problems.

Yes, Your Excellency indeed underlined the cultural diversity of the groups which currently compose Canada. These are distinguished by origin, language, mentalities, local interests and certain structures proper to the provinces. Nevertheless, within the Confederation, all are called to seek the common good necessary for the whole, and to adopt the same commitment in regard to external matters. This difficult balance should be made ever firmer and perfected in a manner that takes all particular characteristics into account. It requires a constant respect for others who are different, dialogue, concern for mutual understanding and certainly, an effective solidarity

Moreover, the rapid change which Canadian society has known and will continue to experience, and which is the source of progress under certain aspects, far from damaging the identity of the country's moral heritage, must always permit the living of all the human and Christian values in a new cultural context. Such values must be strengthened and deepened as the indispensable guidelines, as the beneficial requirements for an authentic progress and even as the conditions of a truly human civilization; they give to life, liberty and community their full meaning. A civilization is only as great as its soul.

Finally, just as the Church in Canada has shouldered its responsibilities in relation to the Churches of other countries, particularly the young Churches, so too can the Canadian people and their Government contribute to developing in the world the highly humanitarian concerns which you have enumerated, particularly those concerning the peaceful settlement of disputes, the guarantee of human rights and especially of freedom of conscience, and solidarity with those less fortunate peoples who tragically lack the necessities of life.

In all these areas, your country will find in the Holy See understanding, support and encouragement. From now on I pray God to guide the Canadian people and their leaders along this path of honour and generosity. To you, Mr. Ambassador, I wish a happy and fruitful mission.

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