



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Sr. DON SONOO UCHIDA
AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN TO THE HOLY SEE***

Monday, 28 October 1985

Mr. Ambassador,

1. I am happy to receive you here and to offer you my cordial best wishes for the successful accomplishment of the mission you are inaugurating as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the Holy See.

As Ambassador of Japan, you take your place in a line of Ambassadors who have left happy memories with the Holy See, and who have contributed to the maintenance and growth of the relationships marked not only by courtesy, which is a special art among Japanese, but by mutual esteem and cultural collaboration. You will always be welcome in this house.

I thank His Majesty Emperor Hirohito for the delicate sentiments he commissioned you to communicate. Please be assured of my respectful remembrance and of my fervent prayers for himself and his country.

2. In particular, I cherish in my heart the charming image of Japan which I had the opportunity of visiting in 1981. Tokyo, Hiroshima, Nagasaki remain unforgettable stages of this visit. And I appreciated the contacts I was able to make on that occasion with the authorities of the country, the cultural world, the people, the representatives of the Shintoist and Buddhist religions, my Catholic brothers and sisters. From among these, numerous Japanese people come here to discover Rome, and I am happy to meet them often at the general audiences. But beyond these personal contacts, Japan, in my view, plays a role of primary importance today not only in the Far East, but on the entire international scene, in economic cultural, political exchanges, as partner of the great powers. Japan managed to carve out this path for itself through adversity; and it has won

great esteem for the courage of its citizens, their discipline, their ingenuity, their scientific discoveries, their spirit. The regard the Catholic Church has for your nation goes back to the dawn of our acquaintance, at time of Saint Francis Xavier.

3. Japan finds itself confronted, as do all countries, with a number of great human problems, and it is this that above all constitutes the object of dialogue with the Holy See. Your Excellency stressed the proliferation of nuclear arms and the consequent possible danger of new catastrophes. Who could fail to understand the very deep sensitivity of your country in this area since everybody still remembers vividly the bombings that were your lot, for the first time in history and one would wish to hope, for the last? You know with what insistence the Holy See unceasingly alerts humanity regarding this danger. I witnessed to this concern when I was with you, at the very sites of the great ordeal.

4. But the problems of justice and of peace go far beyond this crucial point. A whole system of collaboration must be put into effect between the peoples, between all the nations. The anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, which we are celebrating today, reminds us that every country should be considered by the others as an entity apart, with dignity, and it should itself earn this distinction. What needs to be done is to batter down the wall of distrust among the nations, and Your Excellency brought out the fact that the Holy See is working towards this goal; we must help each to respect the other in his cultural tradition, in his will to live worthily; we must – transcending the temptation to domination – engage in the search for solutions of justice, by way of equitable negotiations; even more important, we must be willing to take into account the vital needs of the other partners, so that no single nation be led through extreme deprivation, hunger or injustice to despair or to become involved in procedures of violence; we must promote the conditions of liberty properly understood, the respect of the fundamental human rights. Yes, all these conditions must be present to allow the true building up of peace: it is inseparable from concern for the authentic development and solidarity of nations.

You will be witness here of the Holy See's efforts in this regard, of the ways it proposes for the assent of the nations for the resolution of " the great problems in a truly human manner"

5. Above all, this human character – which we are all seeking – presupposes a clear and firm conception of the dignity of man, of the irrevocable rights and duties of conscience. In view of the researches, the inventions, the technical achievements that human beings are developing in all areas, thanks to the spirit of freedom given them by God when he created them to his image, there is a need to develop at the same time a growth of conscience through a keener sense of good and evil, the right kind of a respect for erection and the unconditional – respect for man himself who transcends these things. This is true when one thinks of the terrifying possibilities that men can have at their disposal through armaments. It is true likewise of the grave risks that biological and genetic manipulations represent for man, as Your Excellency brought out. Even the states, in their concern for the common good of their citizens, cannot afford to neglect – any more than the

community of nations can – to interest themselves in the formation of an ethical sense. The great religious traditions, drawing on the best of their resources, can contribute powerfully to strengthening this human dignity and this rectitude of conscience.

6. But the spiritual supplement which humanity needs is not limited to this ethical sense. It aims likewise at the satisfaction of the religious aspiration which characterizes the human heart always and which a materialist civilization cannot fill. It drives man to the establishment of more profound relationship with the transcendent being who is at the source of the existence of every being of life, of love, who gives full meaning to human life and who deserves to be sought, adored and loved for himself. Is this not the very essence of religion? This is what the Church would like to witness to with the Tradition that is her own and in which she sees a mission to the service of humanity. This is what the Holy See wishes to promote along with peace, justice and development, in respect of individuals and of peoples. This is also what is witnessed to by the Christian communities of Japan, whose influence far surpasses their numerical importance and who enjoy with you a freedom of worship and of instruction which is a credit to your country.

It is for the welfare, the progress and the growth in every respect of the Japanese people that I renew before you my fervent good wishes. I pray the Most High to bring all of this to fulfilment. And to you yourself, Mr. Ambassador, I reiterate my cordial best wishes for a successful and fruitful mission.

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