



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

TO H.E. Mr FRANK SHAKESPEARE

NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO THE HOLY SEE**Thursday, 8 January 1987* Mr Ambassador, I am very pleased to greet you today as you present the Letters of Credence accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America. You come to continue and to build upon the work which was initiated by your esteemed predecessor. I welcome you most cordially and I offer my prayers and best wishes for the successful fulfilment of your mission. A primary purpose of diplomatic relations is the promotion of that spirit of understanding which is essential for true justice and peace in the world. In conformity with the mission of the Church, the Holy See engages in this privileged forum of dialogue not for political purposes, but in order to serve the principles and values which underlie the common good of the whole human family. In your role as the diplomatic representative of the United States, you serve as the spokesman for your Government's policies, initiatives and programs. At the same time, you represent all the people of your country, in the rich diversity of its cultural and ethnic traditions. Thus, in welcoming you today I wish to extend my warmest greetings to all your beloved fellow-citizens. I am grateful that Divine Providence has already made it possible for me in the past to make a Pastoral Visit to the Catholic faithful in your land, and I look forward with joy to visiting the southern and western parts of your country later this year. In my [message for the 1987 World Day of Peace](#), I drew attention to two key elements of peace: development and solidarity. My reflections were based on the fact that we are all members of one and the same human family. This means that no matter what may separate or divide us, what unites us is far greater and more fundamental. We are brothers and sisters in a shared humanity. The task that lies before us is therefore to accept with deep respect and openness one another's differences of language and race, culture and creed. And, at the same time, we must keep ever in mind what it is that makes us one: our human nature. Upon this we have to build our future. In the promotion of an effective solidarity, governments have a crucial role to play through the policies and programs that they approve. Genuine human solidarity is rooted in the basic equality of all men and women. Thus, every public policy should protect the basic dignity and the human rights of every person or group of persons, from the unborn child to the oldest members of society. In addition, government programs can contribute in a significant way to the development of open and honest human relationships, and to the establishment of strong bonds within families and communities. This is not to ignore the real racial, linguistic, religious, social and

cultural differences which exist among peoples; nor does it minimize the great difficulties entailed in overcoming long-standing divisions and injustices. We must keep constantly before our eyes those elements which unite us, those authentic human values which we hold in common. Such concerns will, I am sure, find a ready response in your country, in connection with the pastoral solicitude shown by the Catholic Bishops of the United States towards the needs of the less prosperous sectors of society at home and of the vast numbers of poverty-stricken members of the human family taken as a whole. Problems of such great import and urgency cannot fail to call for an examination of conscience based upon an objective moral code. I know that your country has always been deeply committed to extending aid to those in need. As you have remarked, the American people have welcomed numerous refugees to their shores while also reaching out in fraternal concern to the poor in other nations. This distinguished record of generosity and compassion deserves the admiration of all. At the same time, it is obvious that the many immigrants who have been received with hospitality in your land have in turn contributed in no small way to the human, social and civil development of the American nation. Through a great moral effort on the part of all the ethnic groups of widely differing origins have forged a united society with common ideals of tolerance, mutual respect and harmony. Such a moral effort should never diminish, but should steadily develop and grow, inspired by faith in God and by genuine human solidarity. The problem of refugees has certainly not been solved. It remains a major problem of our age. I am therefore pleased that the United Nations Organization has designated 1987 as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. In calling attention to this important concern, the United Nations has also reminded us of the need for renewed collaboration between the Governments of all countries, with the assistance of International Organizations and Non-Governmental institutions. In all these efforts, diplomacy and dialogue play a key role. You and your colleagues will be able to contribute in a significant way to relieving the sufferings of the millions who have nowhere to live and lack the means essential for a decent human life. It is one of the many ways in which diplomacy serves the common good of humanity. Mr Ambassador, I hope that your mission to the Vatican will be a most useful and fulfilling one for you. May God assist you in your efforts. And I invoke his blessings of peace and harmony upon all the beloved people of the United States of America.

*AAS 79 (1987), p. 1161-1163

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