



The Holy See

*Discurso al Embajador de TURQUÍA,
Excmo. Sr. Don Selçuk KORKUD**

13 de junio de 1988

Mr. Ambassador,

I am happy to receive you at the very beginning of the high mission the President of the Republic of Turkey has entrusted to you to the Holy See. The content of your address testifies to the noble sentiments you bring to your office. I thank you most sincerely for your words, and I shall be grateful if you will express my heartfelt gratitude to His Excellency Mar Kenan Evren for the greetings and good wishes he entrusted you to convey to me.

In welcoming Your Excellency, as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary accredited to the Holy See, I sincerely hope that your mission, a continuation of that carried out by your distinguished predecessors, may contribute not only to maintaining the good relations to which you alluded just now, between the Apostolic See of Rome and your Government, but, that it may be a new and valuable stone in the, as yet, unfinished edifice of these bilateral relations. We all know that the art of diplomacy, if it is worthy of the name and able to promote the general and particular good of the populations concerned, demands an unceasing search for the truth, loyalty, and continuous dialogue, so as to bring about an improvement in those situations still in need of it, a fortiori to dispel misunderstandings and to regulate situations of conflict.

Every diplomat, whatever his religious or cultural tradition, cannot but be a person prepared to dialogue, one who hopes for peace. The essential work of peace, precious and fragile, is indispensable for the happiness of every human being and nation.

I experienced real satisfaction as I listened to you stress the importance your Government and your nation attach to the human values of tolerance and respect, to the exclusion of all racial or religious discrimination. Equally you stress the efforts your country is making to cooperate in world

security measures, which are often compromised by conflict and the terrorist methods we condemn. This cooperation is directed equally towards the least privileged peoples. You may be pleased to know, Mr. Ambassador, that the Holy See and its Head carry out an extensive and disinterested- activity in the defence and promotion of human rights, justice, morals, and international peace. I am all the more sensitive to your assurances as I have the certitude that Your Excellency will fulfil your mission for peace with ardour and discretion in all the areas where your diplomatic intervention may prove both useful and necessary.

Allow me, Mr. Ambassador, to name an area of concern which I have especially at heart, and which I often mention to diplomats accredited to the Holy See. I mean religious freedom, because respect for this liberty is of fundamental importance for peace. On 1 January of this year, on the occasion of the traditional Day of Peace instituted by Pope Paul VI, I wished to make it the theme of a message destined to all government authorities. Actually, when one considers the events taking place in the world one cannot but notice that forty years after the universal declaration of human rights, millions and millions of people in numerous regions of our universe still suffer from the consequences of oppressive legislation, sometimes from persecution, but more often from subtle forms of discrimination. This state of affairs is a heavy mortgage on peace. Certainly, in your country Catholics are a small minority. More precisely, Mr. Ambassador, your Government, noticing that these Christian minorities abide by the legitimate laws of your nation, will honour themselves by assuring their religious freedom. These Catholics of different rites are happy to live on your soil in so far as they feel safe, have the use of adequate places and premises where they may deepen and celebrate the faith they have received and which they have the sacred right to hand on to their children. Every state, especially once it has opened diplomatic relations with the Apostolic See of Rome, distinguishes itself highly by a clear attitude of justice in regard to believers who have legitimately made a choice of religion. I am confident, Mr. Ambassador, that your mission will serve to bring to the communities mentioned the happiness of living in peace in your land. Your country's welcome to me in 1979 is engraved in my memory. Pope Paul VI also visited it and Pope John XXIII demonstrated his zeal and kindness there when he was Apostolic Delegate to Ankara.

In thanking you again for your words full of respect and hope, I wish, Excellency, that you may experience much moral and spiritual satisfaction in the fulfillment of your high mission to the Holy See. Do I need to add the assurance, Mr. Ambassador, that the understanding and support you may rightly expect from the Apostolic See will always be at your service? Please be so good as to convey this same assurance to the President of the Republic of Turkey, His Excellency Mr. Kenan Evren, with my homage and very high esteem and my wishes for the prosperity and peace of the whole Turkish nation. On your person, your Mission and those who are dear to you, I invoke the light, the strength and the protection of Almighty God.

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