



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
A S. E. IL SIG. EMANUELE SCAMMACCA
DEL MURGO E DELL'AGNONE,
NUOVO AMBASCIATORE DELL'ITALIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE****

Giovedì, 17 marzo 1988

Mr. Ambassador,

1. As you begin your mission as Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister plenipotentiary of the Italian Republic to the Holy See, you have wished to express to me your kindest regards, while assuring me of your readiness to enter into cordial and open collaboration. I am sincerely grateful to you.

At this moment my thoughts turn respectfully to the President of the Republic, Francesco Cossiga, who carries out his high mandate with wisdom for the good of the nation. I ask you to kindly convey my greetings to him.

In assuming this demanding office, which up to now has been worthily held by your esteemed predecessor, you have wished to emphasize the unique bonds which join Italy to the Holy See. Rightly so; in all its expressions, the long history of the Italian people has been profoundly marked by Catholicism, which has made such a great contribution to the cultural richness of which Italy is proud. Even recent affairs in contemporary Italy, which is working to promote civil and political liberties, have seen the active involvement of Catholics. In the light of their faith, they make a specific contribution to the - foundation of the State on authentically human values, in conformity with the Christian traditions of the nation.

2. My apostolic solicitude for the Church of Rome which is entrusted to me, and for the particular Churches of Italy, far from being lessened by the universality of the mission connected with the office of Successor of Peter, is in fact increased.

Called, in God's mysterious design, from a far distant land to the munus petrinum, I heard addressed to me the words: «Leave your land and go where I will send you». This land has become my land as well, as I had occasion to say on the very day of my election to the papal throne, and its expectations and aspirations, its hopes and achievements, have become mine as well.

The pastoral service which I carry out in the Church of Rome and in my visits to the various dioceses of Italy have as their goal the growth in faith, hope and love of Italian Catholics, whom I encourage to become involved, through a dialogue that is fair and respectful towards all, in an ever more effective collaboration between Church and State, for the good of individuals and of the community.

You have recalled, Mr. Ambassador, the recent Concordat with which the two parties have agreed on the one hand to confirm the distinction between ecclesial community and political community and, on the other, to assure an ever more fruitful collaboration between them, since both, though in different respects, serve the personal and social vocation of the same persons who form the living fabric of the nation. For its part, the Holy See is well convinced of its duty to proceed in this direction, and it hopes that eventual difficulties in application will find solutions which are equitable and satisfying for all, inspired solely by a desire for the common good, and sought in open willingness and mutual esteem.

3. In this context, I cannot fail to confirm our attention to the problems of the formation of the new generations. It has rightly been recognized that an education which failed to allocate due space to the religious dimension – which in Italian society is and has been expressed historically, in such a preponderant way, in the Catholic religion – would be lacking with respect to its own ethical and cultural roots. Moreover, today's Italian society shows a sensitivity to Christian and Catholic religious values, notwithstanding certain indications to the contrary in various areas. The choice, by a large majority, of religious education in public schools has borne this out in an eloquent way.

There is a special interest in the family in Italy today; this is true in spite of the worrisome signs of a certain moral laxity, which I hope is temporary and confined to certain areas. The Church intends to work for the confirmation and, where necessary, the recovery of family values, aware that through her solicitude she is making a rich contribution to the growth – of society. In addition, the Church is confident that the public authorities and all the members of society are striving with equal commitment to defend and promote the institution of the family, which the Italian Constitution itself places among the pillars of civil life.

4 With good reason it has been pointed out that the Italian Constitution includes among its inalienable principles the promotion and safeguarding of the human person. Now, it is well known that Christian philosophical and theological speculation has contributed in a specific and decisive way to the elaboration of the concept of person.

The Church is committed to protecting the existence, dignity, and inviolability of the human person at every moment of his existence, as well as to promoting the development of both his individual and social dimensions. She encourages her children to take advantage of every opportunity to make a contribution in such an important area, with particular attention to the forms of volunteer work which aim to bring relief to the old and new forms of suffering and poverty.

I wish here to recall that the theme of the person is also at the centre of the recent Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*; here I have presented the new and more demanding requirements of solidarity in the context of individual countries and in relations among the various countries and «worlds», from a global point of view. Within this perspective we find man's yearning for peace, which the Church shares with every person of good will and actively sustains by her action in the various parts of the world. This yearning is deeply felt by the Italian people, who have made it an important value in their Constitution.

5. Promotion of every authentic human value, the safeguarding of the person and his inalienable rights, the consolidation of peace within each nation and in international relations: these are some of the objectives of the collaboration which exists between Church and State in Italy. I trust, Mr. Ambassador, that, thanks also to your work, this mutual cooperation will be able to grow even greater, promoting the ever fuller and more secure attainment of the goals mentioned.

With this in view, I am pleased to assure you of the ready cooperation of the Holy See, the Italian Episcopal Conference, which is actively involved in the implementation of the Concordat where it calls for their intervention, and of all the various members of the ecclesial communities. I am happy to receive the assurances of a similar readiness on the part of the authorities of the Italian State, and my hope is that fruitful work may be done, in a climate of open and cordial dialogue.

With these sentiments, as I receive your credentials, I gladly extend to Your Excellency my best wishes for the success of your mission, upon which I invoke the Lord's protection.

To you, your family and your collaborators I give my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing, extending it with equal warmth to the President, the authorities and the whole Italian people.

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