



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
A S.E. IL SIGNOR MICHEL AKIS PAPAGEORGIOU,
NUOVO AMBASCIATORE DI GRECIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE***

Sabato, 1° luglio 1989

Mr. Ambassador,

It is with great satisfaction that I listened to the address which you have just made on the occasion of the presentation of your Letters of Credence as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Hellenic Republic to the Holy See. With all my heart I thank you, and I would be pleased if you express my gratitude to His Excellency Mr Christos Sartzetakis, the President, for having given you the noble task which you are assuming today. I welcome you, Mr. Ambassador, in the name of the Holy See and, without delay I want to express my best wishes for the success of your mission; may you also find your stay in Rome pleasant, given that you will be the first Greek Ambassador to the Holy See to have a permanent residence in Rome.

Your Excellency quite rightly emphasized your country's attachment to the ideals which it has proposed to humanity as well as to the spiritual and moral values of Christianity. This rich and noble tradition is a source of inspiration for the creation of ways leading to the total development of the human person and for the happiness of peoples. You have pointed out that, for its part, the government of Athens is making efforts on the national and international levels to promote dialogue between individuals, social groups, and States. Is it not this internal dynamism which guides the Hellenic nation along the paths of cooperation and solidarity with the peoples of the world suffering from delays in development or from endemic calamities?

The policy of your leaders and compatriots is certainly in harmony with the Holy See's concern in matters regarding the defence and promotion of human rights, of justice and peace in today's world. May I mention two encyclicals of my revered predecessors. I refer to *Pacem in terris*,

published by John XXIII in 1963, the first encyclical to be addressed to all the Heads of State, and second, I am happy to recall *Populorum progressio*, signed by Paul VI in 1967, the significance of which I myself chose to emphasize in a special document twenty years later. Time has shown that these two documents have contributed greatly to making public opinion sensitive to what the Church says and does in the field of human rights, of sharing the goods of the earth, of the priority given to the neediest, of the risks created for all humanity when science and technology dull consciences, and of her public or hidden efforts for peace.

On hearing you say that you are resolved to spare no effort in fulfilling your noble mission, I am happy to encourage Your Excellency to confirm the good relations existing between the Republic of Greece and the Holy See and, in general, to work to promote the human, moral and spiritual values without which civilizations undergo tragic crises, when they are not doomed to disappear.

I have the comforting certitude that your mission will contribute significantly to the quiet and positive insertion of the Catholic communities, both of the latin and Byzantine rites, into Greek society.

At the close of this meeting I take pleasure in pointing out that your embassy coincides with the tenth anniversary of diplomatic relations between your country and the Apostolic See of Rome. I assure Your Excellency that you will benefit greatly from the respect, understanding and support which you may rightfully expect in the Vatican City. I also wish that you may find due satisfaction in the exercise of your duties.

To God I entrust your mission begun today, as well as the prosperity, harmony and happiness of your nation.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n. 32 p.11.*

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