



The Holy See

*Discurso al Embajador de BÉLGICA,
Excmo. Barón Henri BEYENS**

31 de octubre de 1991

Mr. Ambassador,

With pleasure I receive Your Excellency here today on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters by which His Majesty the King of Belgium accredits you to the Holy See.

I bid you welcome, Mr Ambassador! I thank you for your words because they express the lofty sentiments which inspire you at this time when you are beginning your mission.

Your presence stirs up in me the precious memories I have of the welcome which Belgium gave me during my pastoral visit in 1985. At that time I was able to see once again the qualities and wealth of tradition of a people who have often been at the centre of the great upheavals which have afflicted the European continent for centuries, thus shaping its original physiognomy. Through the cultural diversity which characterizes it, deep-rooted values, the greater part of which spring from Christian sources, have constituted essential reference points throughout its history.

You mentioned the new stage which the nation is currently going through in working to perfect its institutions in order to satisfy the aspirations of its different components. Please allow me to express my sincere wish for the successful accomplishment of the transformations in progress, for the full development of all your citizens who will continue generously to exercise their traditional solidarity.

Because of its geographic location, economic and intellectual dynamism, and international openness, Belgium plays a significant role in Europe. With satisfaction I heard you express your country's attachment to the institutions which foster understanding among the nations of the old continent in order to promote peace and the progress of unity and cooperation, which are so

desirable especially in view of today's problems. Thus you share the Holy See's greater concerns, such as those that it wishes to express by participating in the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe as well as the process created by the signing of the Helsinki Accords and the Paris Charter.

During a time of great change in Europe and other parts of the world, it is important for the largest number of countries to cooperate in the light of the experiences, and even the sufferings, of the past, in order to build the new international order which should permit our contemporaries and the new generations to lead a better life all over this planet. Belgium actively contributes, as you emphasized, in the activity of the United Nations and especially in the establishment of more just and constructive relations between the peoples of North and South through intense exchange and respect for the dignity of individuals and peoples. Some countries close to you are traversing a difficult period at present; I hope that underprivileged peoples in time of trial may always receive the support they so badly need for their development.

You know, Mr Ambassador, that the role which the Catholic Church wants to play in the international community is in response to no other conditions than a dear defence of human beings, their spiritual freedom, their fidelity to the wealth of their nature and their vocation to form a single family in diversity but fraternity. The perspectives which you just outlined and your reflections on the essential human foundations of international life happily show that there is a real convergence between Belgium and the Holy See in the service of the human community.

In receiving you today, my thoughts turn to the faithful of the Catholic Church in Belgium who have constantly occupied an important position in the nation's life. Important figures of spirituality and theology as well as pastors benefited the universal Church through their influence, which I have been privileged to witness first-hand. As in many other places, Belgian Catholics must face the problems of a changing world, but I am confident that they will not fail to put their fidelity to the Gospel at the service of human life in the best way they can.

Your accreditation to the Holy See, Mr Ambassador, attests to the existence of the good relations which it has with Belgium I am sure that you will contribute to their continuation and further development. You can count on all the support you need from my collaborators to fulfil your mission well.

I ask Your Excellency to express my deferential greeting to His Majesty the King of the Belgians and to assure him of my fervent best wishes for his person, his family and all his compatriots.

I invoke God's blessing upon you, your loved ones and your collaborators, as well as all the people of Belgium.

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