



The Holy See

*Discurso al Embajador de TURQUÍA,
Excmo. Sr. Don Ömer Engin LÜTEM**

7 de marzo de 1992

Mr. Ambassador,

I. In receiving from Your Excellency the Letters accrediting you to the Holy See, my thoughts turn first of all to the Turkish people who have been so greatly afflicted in recent days by a mine disaster of singular proportions. On this occasion I want to renew the expression of my deep sympathy for all those persons affected by this tragedy.

I am touched by the deferential message entrusted to you by His Excellency Mr Turgut Ozal, President of the Republic of Turkey, and I would be obliged if you would express to him my gratitude as well as my best wishes for him and the accomplishment of his mission in the service of his fellow-citizens.

Mr. Ambassador, you are welcome here. The words which you just addressed to me dearly express the constructive spirit in which you are beginning your task. With you, I hope that the relations of trust which exist between the Holy See and your country may be strengthened.

2. Events which have taken place in the last few years in Europe as well as the Near East and Middle East have a great importance, which you have pointed out, and offer your country the hope of positive changes, although no one can overlook the various dangers. It is still necessary for all nations to work together and make their efforts converge to maintain peace and give the peoples who have just regained their freedom stable conditions of civic, economic, cultural and spiritual life. It is in this spirit, you know, that the Holy See participates especially in the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In the fulfilment of its proper tasks the Holy See spares no

effort in supporting the individuals or communities most exposed to discrimination, particularly of an ethnic or religious nature. This is one of the essential reasons for the Apostolic See's active presence in international life, where it seeks to draw attention to the human dimensions of the great questions of our day and the implications of a moral and social order on decisions taken in the political or economic fields.

3. Mr. Ambassador, you quite opportunely mentioned the development of interreligious dialogue which the Holy See promotes and to which you accord great interest. It is indeed at the level of a trusting, open exchange of one's deepest convictions that an area of understanding can be found to make progress in the mutual recognition and tolerance which are necessary for a peaceful and dignified life. Like you, I am thinking of your fellow-citizens who have been led to emigrate, hoping that wherever they are they may find respect for their culture and religious traditions.

In Turkey itself institutions are seeking to be aware of the spiritual demands of the various communities and to make provision for them. I express my wish that your fellow-citizens of various religious confessions may enjoy favourable conditions which allow them, in a spirit of dialogue, to make their contribution to the national life with loyalty, always ensuring the vitality of their communities, the education of their children in the spirit of their beliefs, and the possibility of freely exercising their ministry of worship, to name but a few examples.

Last September, as you mentioned, I had the pleasure of joining in the cultural events honouring the great mystic Yunus Emre, so loved by your people. That allowed me to witness the attachment of your nation to that noble minstrel of God's presence in creation and the fraternal love with which all people must live as a song of praise to the one God. I hope that all the Turkish people may continue to be inspired by an equally noble concept of human life in God's eyes.

4. In your country the faithful of the Catholic Church are a modest minority, I would like to greet them warmly on the occasion of this audience. They are especially the depositaries of the memory of a spiritual heritage that is precious to all Christians because in the time of the Apostles the Gospel was brought to your regions and the Church was founded there. Throughout the centuries many of the children of your land have been leading figures of Christian thought and holiness. I know that the Catholics of Turkey are devoted to their homeland which they want to serve in cooperation with all those who comprise the nation. May they be assured of the affection which the Successor of the Apostle Peter has for them!

5 Mr. Ambassador, as you begin your mission to the Holy See, my wish is that you may accomplish it, experiencing the satisfaction of strengthening our relations and developing our mutual understanding. To that end know that all those who work with me here are disposed to facilitate your task and give you whatever help you may need.

With all my heart I invoke the aid of the Most High upon your people and their leaders, yourself,

your loved ones, and your coworkers.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English n. 11 p.10.*

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