



# The Holy See

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***DISCOURS DU PAPE JEAN-PAUL II  
À S. E. MONSIEUR HENRY SÖDERHOLM,  
NOUVEL AMBASSADEUR DE FINLANDE PRÈS LE SAINT-SIÈGE\****

*Samedi, 28 novembre 1992*

Mr. Ambassador,

I am glad to welcome Your Excellency on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Finland to the Holy See.

I am touched by the words you have addressed to me recalling the friendliness and quality of the relations uniting the Holy See and your country. I thank you in particular for conveying to me the courteous and deferential message from His Excellency Mr. Mauno Koivisto, President of the Republic of Finland. I would be grateful if you would convey to him my warmest greetings, and tell him how fondly I recall the cordial welcome I was given by the civil authorities and the Finnish people at the time of my Pastoral Visit in 1989.

By your presence here and by your message, Mr. Ambassador, you show the respect and interest of your nation in human, moral, spiritual and religious issues. Your country has great significance for all the European States, and remains exemplary in today's context. Throughout a period when the communist ideology firmly gripped Eastern Europe in the yoke of oppression, your country and its leaders maintained their national unity strengthened representative democracy within its frontiers and safeguarded their independence in its relations with neighbouring States. But this tradition is also accompanied by great attention to people from other countries and a constant concern for openness and solidarity that does honour to Finland.

These specific qualities are found in the important moments of Finland's history. They were recognized by the rulers of all the nations as a body, in the East as well as in the West, and they

enabled opposing governments to be welcomed on your soil, to meet and to engage in serious negotiations within the European Conference on Security and Cooperation, a forum of considerable range and breadth in the field of international relations. Thus your capital has become a place symbolic of the construction of a fraternal Europe. Henceforth, since the signing of the Final Act on 1 August 1975, the name of Helsinki is linked to essential aspects of cooperation between the States of the European continent.

The Holy See, one of the first to be involved in the process that gave birth to the CSCE, remains very attached, as you have emphasized, to a Europe, one of whose basic cornerstones is peace. Unfortunately, the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina remains a gaping wound in the heart of the continent. As part of the UN forces, some of your compatriots are making their contribution to the peace process and to the necessary duty of humanity towards the peoples concerned. The growth of individuals and peoples cannot occur without everyone's full respect and recognition for the fundamental moral values which are well expressed in the Final Act of the Conference and in the Paris Charter: respect for individuals regardless of their ethnic origin, as well as such essential freedoms as freedom of thought, conscience, religion or conviction, respect for territorial boundaries, non-interference in domestic affairs and the right of peoples to self-determination, collaboration between States for friendlier coexistence and a solidarity that goes beyond national frontiers, without forgetting the commitment made by all the signatories to settle their differences by peaceful means.

I fervently wish that, as cause for hope, the measures of the Final Act of Helsinki may help consolidate peace between individuals and peoples, a peace that necessarily involves reconciliation whereby each party, overcoming the tensions and divisions of the past by healing of memory and conversion of heart, is committed to serving his country and the international community.

I turn my thoughts to your fellow citizens as a whole. I hope that in the heart of Europe they may share with their brothers and sisters the sense of dialogue and the desire for peace of which they have often given proof. My thoughts also turn to the Catholics of Finland. They are few, but they wish to play an active part in the social life of their country, thanks to the constructive relations they are building with communities of other religious denominations in a spirit of ecumenism and fraternal charity, and the warm welcome the authorities give to the pastors who come to care for the Catholic faithful.

At the time your mission as the Representative of the Republic of Finland is beginning, I hope, Mr. Ambassador, that your stay will bring you great joy. Contemplating the city from the Janiculum and discovering its numerous riches, you will be able to perceive the links between the culture to which you belong and Roman culture, so as to highlight their complementarity. For their part, diplomatic relations express the mutual trust that unites us. Rest assured that you will always find attentive support and a cordial welcome among my coworkers.

I wholeheartedly invoke an abundance of God's blessings on Your Excellency, on the Finnish people and on their leaders.

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