



The Holy See

***DISCOURS DU SAINT-PÈRE JEAN-PAUL II
AU NOUVEL AMBASSADEUR DE BELGIQUE PRÈS LE
SAINT-SIÈGE, S.Exc. M. JUAN CASSIERS À L'OCCASION
DE LA PRÉSENTATION DES LETTRES DE CRÉANCE**** *Samedi 12 novembre 1994*

Mr. Ambassador,

1. I have pleasure in welcoming your Excellency at the presentation of the Letters with which His Majesty King Albert II accredits you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belgium to the Holy See.

First of all, Mr. Ambassador, I would like to express my gratitude to you for the words with which you have addressed me; they demonstrate your lofty intentions as you begin your new mission in the service of your country. They also testify to the Holy See's open and cordial relations with Belgium.

2. With regard to what you have just stated, I am particularly sensitive to the value Belgium attaches to inter-State collaboration and solidarity, these dimensions of international life are essential if peace is to be reinforced among nations and peoples, I also appreciate your specific regard for the dignity of individuals and communities, especially at a time when in many regions people are suffering because the security of individuals and their possessions, to which all have a right, is not fully guaranteed. A sense of solidarity and justice must be the essential principle of all assistance, in order to give those communities which need it the kind of support that fosters harmony and brotherly understanding between the various cultural groups. What you have expressed touches on some of the Holy See's constant preoccupations, in its spiritual mission and in its specific vocation to serve all nations.

3. I cherish in my heart the memory of King Baudouin, who remains an example of Christian life amid worldly affairs and a model of generosity at the service of the people. He died just after the historic conclusion of the State's constitutional reform. He remains a shining example for his compatriots and for all those who are called to govern the country with concern for federal loyalty, to use his own words, a loyalty which was for him one of the fundamental values of social life, the guarantee of peace and the spiritual and material growth of all.

I am also thinking of his successor, His Majesty King Albert II, who is continuing the same task, showing his compatriots their great common objectives, which include the practice of solidarity, justice and the protection of the weakest, the foundations of a nation's life. Indeed, the citizens of every country are required to build a society where each is

responsible for his brothers and sisters who live in the land. I am again close in prayer to all your fellow citizens, especially young people, who seek reasons for hope. I was not granted the opportunity to meet them last May as I had hoped, to honour a worthy son of your land, Fr Damien de Veuster. My keenest wish is to undertake this journey as soon as possible.

4. In the range of difficulties which contemporary society is undergoing, I encourage the efforts of the authorities and people to enable all those who reside in Belgium to live in greater dignity and support themselves, be decently housed and meet the needs of their families; this must be stressed particularly in this International Year of the Family. Faithful to their long tradition of openness to the world and of solidarity, many Belgians are involved in serving everyone, in their country and on other continents. They are directly continuing the work of Fr Damien. I encourage them in their tasks to reduce situations of exclusion or unworthy treatment which is sometimes inflicted particularly on the poorest and on children. I hope that your fellow-citizens may continue their assistance to the most underprivileged in this world, with the concern for the advancement of individuals and the development of peoples, to allow each human community to make the most of its own spiritual, cultural and moral wealth.

The apostle of the lepers also witnesses to Belgium's long missionary tradition, which you have just recalled, with his concern to take the Gospel everywhere and to express it through educational and charitable work. With her special vocation, in your country as on all continents the Church takes particular care of the formation of youth giving them an education based on human principles and Christian morals. Catholics in Belgium especially those who are involved in education, desire to help the nation's future generations, to be aware of their duties, in view of the common good and cordial understanding among everyone, which is so necessary for democratic life.

5. International life is still troubled by a series of ethnic or regional conflicts. You are aware that the Holy See constantly encourages and supports efforts to negotiate solutions so that through negotiation the different opposing parties may agree to talk and to sit at the same table, and so that each people may have access to the autonomy required for international recognition within established borders. The Church has no other ambition than human advancement in both personal and social life. The Holy See knows that it may rely on the Belgian Government to continue actively participating in the quest for peace through fraternal and respectful dialogue wherever this is necessary, in the field and in the international organizations in which your country takes a particular interest. I also rejoice that in the heart of Europe, for whose greater unity and solidarity we should constantly strive, the authorities of your country and all your compatriots are making tireless efforts to achieve these goals.

6. Mr Ambassador, at the start of your mission as representative of the Kingdom of Belgium, I hope that your task will be fruitful and that your stay will bring you great joy and satisfaction, both from the meetings you will be able to have as well as from discovering the city's treasures. Be assured that in fulfilling the office entrusted to you, you will always find a ready welcome and support in my co-workers.

At the conclusion of this meeting, I would like you to convey my respectful greetings to His Majesty, King Albert II, and my sincere wishes for himself, for the royal family and for all his country-men.

Upon Your Excellency, your loved ones, your co-workers and the people and Government of Belgium, I cordially invoke

the Lord's

blessing.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English n. 50 p.8. © Copyright 1994 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana*

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana