



# The Holy See

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***DISCOURS DU SAINT-PÈRE JEAN-PAUL II  
À S.Exc. M. REYNIER FLAES,  
NOUVEL AMBASSADEUR DU ROYAUME DES PAYS-BAS\****

*Vendredi 15 décembre 1995*

Mr. Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you to the Apostolic See as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of The Netherlands.

I appreciate your warm words to me and the different issues you have just described; as you know, they are also the main concerns of the Holy See in accordance with its specific mission in international life. I am pleased with these common attentions and the quality of the relations linking the Apostolic See and your country, relations to which your predecessor, Count van Limburg Stirum, made a notable contribution. I thank you for conveying to me the courteous and deferential message of her Majesty, Queen Beatrix. I would be grateful if you would kindly reciprocate my sincere greetings and cordial wishes for her lofty office.

2. You have mentioned one of the major challenges of society in your country which, like many others, is facing the problems of coexistence between members of different races, cultures and religions. While preserving its own specific organization, its particular traditions and the cultural, moral and spiritual values which are essential for national unity, a State has the duty to remain open and welcoming to those seeking a land in which to settle. True integration implies recognition by the newcomers of the rules regulating the life of the national community, which all must respect and, the dialogue between all members of society. But it is also necessary to guide patiently all those who wish to be integrated into the community which receives them, so that they favourably

accept the constraints inherent in social life while preserving their own culture. A sense of acceptance and solidarity, particularly with regard to the most underprivileged – qualities which your people are keen to develop – can only contribute to increasing the active participation of all in building an ever more congenial society, respectful of the different sensitivities of all its members.

3. In the social context, it is appropriate to give a special place to its basic cell, the family. It is through the family that society's fundamental human links are built. It is the stable commitment between a man and a woman that establishes the family, built on the values of endurance and fidelity necessary for the spiritual, moral, psychological and physical development of all its members. We must be certain that the fraternal relations which are learnt in the family, through education and the affectionate attention of each, can only help the harmonious and peaceful growth of personalities.

4. In mentioning my recent visit to the headquarters of the United Nations General Assembly, thereby showing the attention and esteem of the Dutch authorities for the interventions of the Apostolic See in international life, you have remembered some of the basic principles of social life, at the heart of a nation and in the relations between States and peoples. With the collapse of the totalitarian regimes, the promotion of human rights has made significant progress in many countries. But nevertheless, in some peoples one can observe the temptation to withdraw into themselves, to resort to weapons rather than accept dialogue and negotiation in order to resolve conflicts and achieve the peace which all need. In this area I acknowledge the efforts of the States that have striven to support the peace negotiations and to contribute material aid and moral and spiritual comfort to the peoples in the different parts of the globe where fratricidal fighting still continues. I want to reiterate the great esteem I have for the authorities of your country, which has the experience of a tradition of dialogue, democratic life and hospitality, and which has taken part in the peace process on different continents, thus promoting the values of freedom, justice and solidarity.

5. You know that the Holy See is attached to the most fundamental human rights on which all the other rights are based: the right of every human being to see his dignity recognized. In fact our contemporaries' attitude to their brothers and sisters is formed by teaching consciences to respect every person from his conception to the natural end of his life. Man's life cannot be based only on the social recognition accorded him or denied him by others. The future of the human being and of society is linked to our attitude to people, especially the weakest and the most deprived, because in promoting their dignity and by showing them compassion, we cause all humanity to grow. Before them, reason urges us to recognize the profound being, the spiritual being, beyond what is apparent at a mere glance. I hope that the Catholic Church's thinking is accepted in this spirit and that the media will take pains to help make it known without bias.

You have just recalled my recent visit to the famous Roman church of Sts Michael and Magnus,

the Church of the Frisians, for the consecration of the altar, stressing Rome's Dutch Catholic community's desire to continue the tradition of hospitality towards their compatriots and of prayer in this temple of the Lord. I am pleased that the pilgrims from your country can find a cultural reference point and a place of spiritual support in this city. I am also thinking of all your fellow citizens. I hope that in the heart of Europe they can develop with their brothers and sisters the sense of dialogue and the desire for peace of which they have frequently given proof. I also wish to mention the Catholics in The Netherlands who are keen to take an active part in their country's social life, through the constructive relations they have with the communities of other religious confessions, in an ecumenical spirit and with fraternal charity.

At the beginning of your mission as Representative of the Kingdom of The Netherlands, I offer you my best wishes. I can assure you that my co-workers will always be ready to give you and the staff of your Embassy the attentive and cordial support which you may need to carry out your duties, in the mutual confidence which marks the diplomatic relations that unite your country with the Holy See.

I wholeheartedly invoke on you, your co-workers and your family, as well as on the people of The Netherlands and their leaders, an abundance of divine Blessings.

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