



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS  
POPE JOHN PAUL II  
TO NINE NEW AMBASSADORS  
TO THE HOLY SEE\***

*Thursday, 24 April 1997*

*Your Excellencies,*

1. I am pleased to receive from Your Excellencies the Letters accrediting you to the Holy See as Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of your respective nations. At the start of your new mission, I offer you my cordial wishes and welcome you to Rome, this city where an ancient civilization has left its imprint not only on the stones, but also on the culture and the expression of moral and spiritual values lived by men down the ages.

2. My recent journey to [Sarajevo](#) prompts me again to make a pressing appeal, through you, for *peace among the human communities* in each country and between nations. You know the value the Church attaches to good understanding between peoples, so that each one can live in tranquillity and build the earthly city together. The growing phenomena of globalization are sometimes at the root of social tensions. However, they can be a source of energy for countries and for friendly exchanges between human beings. This assumes that the rules of international life are more and more deeply inspired by ethical principles.

We should first of all recall *the priority of man*, made to live in society, but who cannot be reduced to this community dimension of his life. Because of its prerogatives and functions, the State is the primary guarantor of human freedoms and rights, that is, of respect for the whole person by virtue of his own dignity; in fact, since he is a spiritual being, man is the fundamental value and counts more than all the social structures in which he takes part. "Any threat to human rights, whether in the framework of man's spiritual goods or in that of his material goods, does violence to this fundamental dimension" (*Address to UNESCO, 2 June 1980; L'Osservatore Romano English*

edition, 23 June 1980, p. 9). This attention to human rights on the part of the authorities instils in all the citizens trust in the national institutions responsible for ensuring their protection.

3. In public life as in the different spheres of social life, every person must encourage *dialogue*. This allows each individual and group to be recognized in their diversity and, at the same time, to feel that they are called to serve their country. It is the task of those who, in one capacity or another, exercise public responsibility to ensure the integration of persons living in the same territory and to enable their activities to work together for the benefit of all. When members of the national community do not play an active part in their country's destiny, their gradual marginalization opens the way to many forms of violence. On the other hand, the State's recognition and consideration of religious and cultural differences, as well as the call for each individual to work for the common good, are elements that strengthen among all the citizens their love of country, their desire to work for its unity and growth, and their openness to others, to the point of offering a fraternal welcome to displaced persons and foreigners.

4. At the level of each country and of the international community, the authorities and social partners are concerned to develop *effective solidarity between citizens and peoples*. As difficulties increase in many countries, greater solidarity is expressed in the first place by emergency aid. In this regard, I acknowledge the efforts of the international community and numerous organizations to provide humanitarian aid, in order to help the world's poorest countries, bring assistance to the civilian populations in war zones, welcome persons forced to flee from their country and offer assistance to regions coping with various natural disasters.

But this solidarity is also expressed in other ways. Indeed, *by means of technical assistance and appropriate training*, countries emerging from difficult periods should be encouraged to provide themselves with stable democratic institutions, to make the most of their wealth for the good of all the inhabitants, and to assure their peoples a moral, civil and intellectual education. It is through the integral advancement of their people that countries will truly be helped to develop, to be the agents of their progress and partners in international life, and to look to the future with trust. For its part, thanks to the objectives of the Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, which were set at the Copenhagen Summit, the UN is making a most timely appeal to all countries to redouble their efforts in this field.

5. Your Catholic citizens, clergy and laity are concerned to be involved in national society, relying on the moral principles which the Holy See constantly teaches and develops. In particular, they play an active part in the areas of education, health and charitable activity, which are three forms of service in which they seek to help young people develop their personality and to accompany those who suffer. In this way they show God's loving face to those around them, with respect for their particular beliefs and without a spirit of proselytism. Freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, which they and all their compatriots must enjoy in the name of equity among all a nation's citizens, gives them the opportunity to nurture their spiritual life and to find in personal

prayer and community celebrations the source of their dynamism in the world.

6. Your Excellencies, our meeting is an opportunity for me to offer you these few reflections. At the end of this ceremony, my thoughts turn to the States you represent to the Successor of Peter and to their leaders. I would be grateful if you would express my sincere esteem and regard to them. I pray that each of your compatriots will have peace and prosperity, as I invoke an abundance of divine blessings on you, your families and your co-workers, as well as on your compatriots.

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