



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN XXIII
TO HER MAJESTY ELIZABETH II, QUEEN OF ENGLAND,
AND HRH PRINCE PHILIP, DUKE OF EDINBURGH****

Friday, 5 May 1961

We welcome Your Majesty to the Vatican today with great joy. Indeed, your presence here with His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh crowns in the happiest way the series of demonstrations of friendship which, from the beginning of this century, have marked relations between the United Kingdom and the Holy See.

We were a young seminarian at the time of the unforgettable visit of King Edward VII to our glorious predecessor Leo XIII, which he made in 1903 after coming to the throne. After so many years We still remember the great impression made then by this gesture of courteous respect. It was the first time after three and a half centuries that a sovereign of Great Britain had come to speak with the Pope.

Twenty years later, in 1923, Your Majesty's grandfather, King George V, was solemnly received here by the great pontiff, Pius XI, Being in Rome in the service of the Holy See at that time, We were once again witness to the favorable effect of this event on public opinion.

Between these two royal visits there was the happy decision taken by your forebear in 1914 to establish diplomatic relations with the Holy See, the cordial nature of which has continued unflinching to this day.

Your Majesty herself was also received by Our immediate predecessor Pius XII shortly before your coronation, and the memory is still fresh in Our mind of the very amiable visit paid Us in the days after Our election by the Queen Mother and Princess Margaret.

We are happy to recall all these past events in your presence, because We consider it rich in

comforting promise for the development of good understanding and reciprocal friendship between Great Britain and the Holy See. This good understanding, We are happy to recognize, is facilitated by the high quality of the diplomats that the United Kingdom accredits to the Apostolic See; their distinction and capability We cannot fail to praise. Good understanding is facilitated still more by reciprocal good will and, we should say, by a certain community of efforts performed mutually for the defense of the fundamental values upon which the life of society rests.

As you know, the Holy See desires and constantly promotes with all its means the realization of the great Christian ideal of peace, charity, and brotherhood between men and nations.

In a world disturbed by so many uncertainties and dangers but deeply and ardently aspiring to see this ideal translated into fact, the great and noble British nation with its wealth of courage, its spirit of initiative, and its tenacity occupies a place that We are happy to emphasize in Your Majesty's presence. It is with personal satisfaction that We continually observe in the development of international events the valuable contribution which the statesmen of your country make toward the maintenance of peace and the development of friendly relations between nations.

We very attentively followed press accounts of Your Majesty's recent journey to parts of the Commonwealth. While our thoughts are turned toward Great Britain and the vast association of this Commonwealth, We also think particularly of the many children of the Catholic Church who live in those vast territories and contribute their part to the promotion of progress and the interests of their countries.

We believe that We can assure Your Majesty that they aspire to be second to none in the practice of the most sincere loyalty to the Crown and to constituted authority.

Finally, may We express the assurance of Our deepest personal esteem toward Your Majesty, who bears the weight of such vast responsibilities with so much simplicity and dignity. With all Our heart We raise Our prayers to God to invoke for your person and for that of your spouse, for the royal family, and for all the people of Great Britain and the Commonwealth, an abundance of heavenly favors.

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