



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI  
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE AUSTRIAN REPUBLIC  
TO THE HOLY SEE\***

*Monday, 16 December 1974*

*Mr. Ambassador,*

We bid you a hearty welcome on your first official visit here in the Vatican, for the presentation of your Letters of Credence as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Austrian Republic to the Holy See and thank you for the friendly words which you have just addressed to us on this occasion. We congratulate you sincerely on this new responsible task which now brings you back again to the Eternal City after filling other high offices in a conscientious and praiseworthy way and after several years' previous diplomatic activity in Rome.

The solemn presentation of your Letters of Credence confirms the good understanding that exists between the Holy See and the Austrian government, the main lines of which are laid down in a Concordat. The glorious history of your country, rich in tradition, is, as You mentioned briefly in your address, deeply marked by a centuries-old confident and fruitful collaboration of State and Church. Among the important areas of common efforts by State and Church today you referred particularly to concern and indefatigable commitment for a lasting peace among the peoples and the contribution to implementing greater social justice in the world.

In accordance with the mandate she received from her divine Founder, the Church has never at any time limited her activity exclusively to the spiritual-supernatural plane but has always offered men also her sincere cooperation to build up among them that brotherly community which corresponds to their true vocation. In doing so the Church, as the Council confirmed again, is «inspired by no earthly ambition; she seeks but a solitary goal to carry forward the work of Christ Himself under the lead of the befriending Spirit. And Christ entered this world to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgment, to serve and not to be served» (Pastoral Constitution

*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 3).

Today the Church is more aware than ever of this essential mission of hers to proclaim to the world the truth that makes people free (cf. *In 8, 2*), to remind men continually of their dignity, of which God Himself is, in the last analysis, the source and the guarantor, and to be the leaven of a wholesome renewal in the whole structure of human society and culture. The service of the Church for the world is all the more urgent at a time when, in national and international life, an alarming and spreading upheaval of basic human values is undermining the foundations of order in society and in the state and threatening man himself in his innermost dignity.

For this season Christians in today's so-called pluralistic society are particularly called upon, also in traditionally Christian nations, to help to win new recognition and credence for the Christian conception of man in the social and national life of their countries by making a determined effort «to promote the true common good». Thus, they should make the weight of their opinion felt, so that civil authority may act with justice, and laws may conform to moral precepts and the common good (Decree on the apostolate of the laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n. 14). As we stressed recently in our message to this year's Austrian Catholic Day, reconciliation of hearts with God in obedience to his commandments, particularly as regards elementary moral values in private and public life, is the prerequisite for true reconciliation among men and for a lasting and just peace in society.

Mr Ambassador, we are relying on your valuable cooperation in our effort to bring about this reconciliation in truth and justice on the national and international plane, which is our deepest wish for the Holy Year now beginning. Be sure that we will appreciate particularly and accompany with our prayers your responsible activity here in the Eternal City in the service of your Austrian people, whom we esteem so highly, and of the Church.

We thank you for the respectful wishes of H.E. the President of the Republic, which you transmitted, and we reciprocate them most willingly. As an expression of our sincere benevolence we impart our Apostolic Blessing to you and your esteemed family and to all your collaborators.

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\*ORa 1975 n.1 p.9.