



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF PAUL VI
TO H.E. MR MARIO SOARES PRIME MINISTER OF PORTUGAL***

Saturday, 19 February 1977

We are happy to receive the visit that Your Excellency, Mr Prime Minister, accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, wished to pay us, on the occasion of the journey undertaken to various capitals of Europe, for the purpose of facilitating the integration of Portugal in the context of the European Community.

This visit is a repeated and public confirmation of the desire of Portugal to maintain, in the new phase of its national life, the traditional ties that have bound it to the Apostolic See for so many centuries.

This desire finds us, too, eager to follow closely, with particular interest and affection, a country which, for many reasons, is very dear to us. We remember its ancient epics and observe attentively the endeavour it is now making to prepare for itself and for its sons a future of new progress in unchanged dignity.

We know what efforts this costs, what sacrifices it demands and what dangers and difficulties jeopardize the implementation of such an enterprise. However, confidence is inspired in us by the virtues of the Portuguese people: their sense of power and, above all, their capacity of taking action.

Another thing that gives us confidence – allow us, Mr. Prime Minister, to say so – is the predilection that the Mother of God, venerated by the Portuguese and by the whole Catholic world in the sanctuary of Fatima, which we, too, have had the fortune to visit, seems to have wished to manifest towards Portugal. This predilection bodes well for the faithfulness of the Portuguese people to the faith of their ancestors. We are happy to see in it, too, a promise of assistance for its determination to construct for itself a future of legitimate and general prosperity, in social security, peace and freedom.

On our side, we are happy to express the wish that this aim will be attained successfully and promptly, thanks to the joint work of all the sons of Portugal, in solidarity and in concord, dictated by a common and noble aim, though in the legitimate differences that a democratic regime allows, or rather demands, in a certain sense This, however, must always be in mutual respect, and in love of the values of religious faith, freedom, justice, national independence and the safeguarding of the inalienable rights of the human person.

We can assure you that the Church, without asking for herself situations of privilege, but the possibility of continuing to carry out, in the legitimate space of full freedom, her own mission of spirituality and moral elevation, will remain also in the future closely united with the Portuguese people, in order to make its dedicated contribution to the welfare and prosperity of your noble nation.

Invoking upon it and upon those who have the responsibility of looking after its destiny, the protection of the Almighty, we wish to express to Your Excellency, Mr. Prime Minister, and to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and all the illustrious members of your Suite, our best wishes and our respects.

*ORa n.9 p.5.