



# The Holy See

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## **ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS XII TO THE NEW MINISTER OF CHINA\***

*Sunday, 16 February 1947*

*Mr. Minister,*

In the determination of His Excellency the President of the Chinese Republic to entrust you with the high office of Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Holy See, We discern a gesture whose deep significance can escape no one.

It is a gesture of particular consideration which will not only be appreciated in all its importance by the entire Catholic world, but above all, will it be greeted by the Catholics of China with profound satisfaction and lively gratitude.

Hence, We heartily welcome Your Excellency as a son and representative of a people of more than 400 millions, whose country was the cradle of Asia's oriental civilization. After thousands of years and despite all sorts of trials and misfortunes they have kept their vigour and their youth—for which not a few other nations could envy them; and aware of their reserves of material and spiritual energy, they look to the future with that calmness and security, which is characteristic only of the strong and the brave.

At the same time We greet Your Excellency as a loyal son of the Church, whose journey to the Catholic faith was illumined by Dante's Divine Comedy and whose thought and actions unite in an exemplary way the love of God and the devotion to your native land.

The noble words you have just pronounced in the presentation of your credential letters reveal, together with your religious and patriotic sentiments, a thorough and sincere acknowledgement of the serious duties that are common to mankind.

There is no place where such an acknowledgement could find a truer echo than in the House of

the Father of Christianity, Who cherishes an equal benevolence for all peoples regardless of any limitations of time and space, of origin and language, of race and culture.

Today, discord and conflicting interests still divide the nations—a tragic consequence of the dreadful years of war.

But in every country the more noble, far-seeing and mature minds have learned in the school of suffering in the recent past that despite all their differences they have a common element so essential that no one can tamper with it without imperiling the very foundations and the prosperity of his own people.

For this reason We regard the exalted sentiments of Your Excellency as the reflection of the mind of a people that after sombre experiences in the past, rises to a wider and truer know-ledge of reciprocal functions and duties, determined to adapt its thought, its will and its action in the international field, to the moral concept that each member of the great family of nations be assured of what belongs to it — *suum cuique tribuere*.

As an outstanding jurist and an active member of Legislative Commissions and International Conferences, Your Excellency is in a better position than many others to judge how far the present results obtained by the rulers of the nations concerning the fundamentals of a secure and lasting peace have satisfied or deluded the legitimate expectations of humanity. It is because We observe that Your Excellency, an authority in post-war international questions, affirms principles of brotherhood and love among nations as indispensable factors of international justice, that Our hope increases that such sentiments be realised and that they may overcome the opposing forces that aim at preventing or delaying the advent of a true peace.

The fact that, in the presence of representatives of the whole world, and for the first time in the history of the Church, We chose to elect a son of China to be a member of the Sacred College; the establishment there of the episcopal Hierarchy; the privilege that was Ours in raising to the honours of the altar a glorious band of Chinese Martyrs; Our sending to your beloved country an Internuncio Apostolic, and now the entrusting of Your Excellency as the first Catholic Minister Plenipotentiary with such an important mission in the centre of Christendom : all these show the progress and the happy development in the relations between the Holy See and China. We have no doubt that the value of this for the welfare of the entire nation will be recognised even by those who do not belong to the Catholic Church.

The mission of Your Excellency now consists in promoting and extending what has been so successfully attained. To your task you bring rich gifts of mind and heart united with an experience that has been acquired and perfected through many years of tireless labour. You are beginning with such lofty sentiments that We feel particular pleasure in assuring you that in the exercise of your high office you will ever find in Us the most ready and benevolent support.

While We reciprocate with equal cordiality the kindly good wishes you brought Us from His Excellency the President of the Chinese Republic, Our thoughts go out with paternal affection to Our Beloved Sons and Daughters of China, to all of whom We lovingly impart Our Apostolic Benediction.

And as the Colonnade of the Vatican Basilica opens its large arms towards the East, so We now lift Our Hands towards the Orient and invoke the protection of the Almighty, over the rugged and arduous journey of the Chinese people from twilight to dawn, which We hope will soon shine forth in a secure internal and external peace.

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*L'Osservatore Romano* 17-18.2.1947, p.1.