



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr JÜRI SEILENTHAL
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
TO THE HOLY SEE****

*Consistory Hall
Friday, 1st June 2007*

Mr Ambassador,

I am very pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Estonia to the Holy See. I thank you for the cordial greetings which you have brought to me from President Ilves and I ask you kindly to convey to him my own respectful greetings, together with my prayerful good wishes for the prosperity and well-being of the Estonian people.

In recent years, while carrying forward the demanding task of social and economic reform at home, Estonia has also sought to strengthen its bonds with Europe and the international community. Your nation's membership in the European Union represents, as Your Excellency has pointed out, not only a resumption of ties stretching back over the centuries, but also the reaffirmation of a great political and spiritual heritage which has shaped the soul of your nation. Europe today, caught up in the process of rapid transformation, has made significant progress in building a common home marked by solid economic growth, the development of new models of unity that are respectful of differences, and a dedication to cooperation in the cause of justice and peace. Estonia has much to contribute to the Europe of tomorrow, thanks in no small part to her hard-won realization of the value of freedom and the sacrifices which freedom entails.

The great revolution which swept Eastern Europe in the final decade of the last century testified, in fact, to the innate and irrepressible yearning for freedom present within individuals and peoples, as well as the inseparability of authentic freedom from the pursuit of truth, respect for the

transcendent dignity of each human person, and a commitment to mutual respect and solidarity. These values, a precious legacy of Estonia's millennial history, must be constantly reappropriated and given practical expression in every sphere of political and social life, in the conviction that they can ensure the breadth of vision and awaken the spiritual energies necessary for creating a future of hope. In recent years your nation has experienced at first hand the daunting challenge of fashioning a society which is genuinely free yet at the same time faithful to its defining traditions. Europe needs this witness, which will surely help the Continent as a whole to "recognize and reclaim with creative fidelity" its fundamental values, values which were decisively shaped by the Christian message (cf. *Ecclesia in Europa*, 109) and constitute an inalienable element of its true identity.

I am grateful for Your Excellency's kind words about the Church in Estonia, and I assure you that the nation's Catholics desire to play their part, in a spirit of respectful cooperation with other Christian believers, in the life of the nation. The Church proposes her teaching in the conviction that the truth of the Gospel sheds light on the reality of the human situation and provides the wisdom needed for individuals and communities to discern and embrace the demands of the moral law which provide the necessary and enduring foundation for just and harmonious relations within society. In a special way, the Church is committed to the promotion of the sanctity of marriage, the basic role and mission of the family, the education of children and respect for God's gift of life from conception to natural death. Since the health of any society depends in no small measure on the health of its families (cf. *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 29), I trust that this witness will contribute to the consolidation of family and community life and, together with wise and far-sighted social policies, will help to revitalize Estonia's long history of strong and united families. For it is in the family, above all, that the young are trained in goodness, generosity, forgiveness and fraternal concern for others, and given a sense of personal responsibility for building a world of freedom, solidarity and hope.

With these sentiments, Mr Ambassador, I offer my prayerful wishes for the work you now undertake in the service of your nation, and I assure you of the constant readiness of the offices of the Holy See to assist you in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon you and your family, and upon all the beloved Estonian people, I cordially invoke God's blessings of joy and peace.

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