



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr GÁBOR GYŐRIVÁNYI,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF HUNGARY TO THE HOLY SEE**
Thursday, 2 December 2010

Mr. Ambassador,

I welcome you with joy on this solemn occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Hungary to the Holy See and I thank you for your kind words. I am grateful for the respectful greetings you have conveyed to me on behalf of President Dr Pál Schmitt and of the Government, which I cordially reciprocate. At the same time I would like to ask you to assure your compatriots of my esteem and good wishes.

After the renewal of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the Republic of Hungary in 1990, it has been possible to develop new trust in an active and constructive dialogue with the Catholic Church. At the same time I nourish the hope that the deep wounds of the materialistic vision of man which had taken hold of the hearts and the community of citizens in your country for almost 45 years, may continue to heal in a climate of peace, freedom and respect for the dignity of humankind.

The Catholic faith is undoubtedly one of the pillars of Hungary's history. When in the distant year 1000 the young Hungarian Prince Stephen received the royal crown Pope Sylvester II sent to him, it came with the mandate to give faith in Jesus Christ room and a home in that land. The personal piety, the sense of justice and the human virtues of this great king are a lofty reference point that is both an incentive and an imperative, then as now, to those who are entrusted with a role of governance or similar responsibility. The State is certainly not expected to impose a specific religion; rather, it should guarantee the freedom to profess and practice the faith. However, politics and the Christian faith overlap.

Of course, faith has its specific nature as an encounter with the living God which opens new

horizons for us beyond the sphere proper to reason. But at the same time it is a purifying force for reason itself that permits it to perform its task better and to see better what pertains to it. It is not a question of imposing rules or modes of behaviour upon those who do not share the faith, its aim is simply to purify reason that wishes to contribute to ensuring here and now, the acknowledgment and attainment of what is good and just (*cf.* Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 28).

In recent years — little more than 20 — since the fall of the iron curtain, an event in which Hungary played a significant role, your country has occupied an important place in the community of peoples. Six years ago Hungary became a member of the European Union. It thus makes an important contribution to the choir of voices of the European States. At the beginning of next year, for the first time Hungary will assume the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Hungary is called upon in a special way to mediate between East and West.

The Sacred Crown, an heirloom of King Stephen, by combining the circular *corona graeca* with the *corona latina* placed in an arch over it — both bear the face of Christ and are surmounted by the cross — already shows how East and West should sustain each other and enrich each other with their spiritual and cultural heritage and with the vigorous profession of faith. We can also see this as a *leitmotiv* for your country.

The Holy See also notes with interest the efforts the political authorities are making to introduce a change in the Constitution. It has expressed its intention to make a reference to the Christian heritage in the Preamble. It is likewise to be hoped that the new Constitution will be inspired by the Christian values, particularly as regards the place of marriage and the family in society and the protection of life.

Marriage and the family constitute a decisive foundation for the healthy development of civil society, countries and peoples. Marriage as a basic form of ordering the relationship between a man and a woman and, at the same time, as a founding cell of the State community has continued to be modelled on biblical faith. In this way, marriage has given Europe its particular aspect and its humanism, also and precisely because it has meant continuously learning and achieving the characteristic of fidelity and self-denial that this implies. Europe would no longer be Europe if this basic cell of the social fabric were to disappear or to be substantially transformed.

We all know how endangered marriage and the family are today — on the one hand because of the erosion of their most intimate values of stability and indissolubility, due to the increasing liberalization of divorce laws and the ever more widespread custom of men and women of cohabiting without legal sanction and the protection of marriage, and, on the other, because of the different forms of union that have no basis in the history of culture and law in Europe. The Church cannot approve legislative initiatives that imply the support of alternative models of life for couples and the family. They contribute to the weakening of the principles of natural law and thus to the relativization of all legislation, as well as of the awareness of values in society.

“As society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbours but does not make us brothers” (Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 19). Reason is capable of guaranteeing the equality between people and of giving stability to their civic coexistence but, ultimately, cannot establish brotherhood. This originates in a transcendent vocation of God, who created men and women out of love and taught us through Jesus Christ what fraternal charity is. Brotherhood, in a certain sense, is the other facet of liberty and equality. It opens man to altruism, to a civic sense, to attention to others. Indeed, a human person only finds him- herself once the mentality focused on individual claims are overcome and develop into an attitude of giving freely and of genuine solidarity, which corresponds better to the person’s communitarian vocation.

The Catholic Church, like the other religious communities, plays a significant role in Hungarian society. She commits herself on a broad scale with her institutions in the fields of education and culture, as well as those of social assistance, and in this way contributes to moral construction, that is truly useful to your country. The Church trusts that she will be able to continue, with the support of the State, to carry out and intensify this service for the good of the people and for the development of your country. May collaboration between the State and the Catholic Church in this area grow in the future too for the benefit of all.

Distinguished Mr Ambassador, at the beginning of your noble office I wish you every success in your mission while at the same time I assure you of the full support of my collaborators. May Mary Most Holy, *Magna Domina Hungarorum*, extend her own protective hand over your country. I warmly implore for you, Mr Ambassador, for your family and for your collaborators, in the Embassy and for the entire population of Hungary, an abundance of divine Blessings.

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