



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF IRELAND**

H. E. Mr BRENDAN DILLON

ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE* *Monday, 18 September 1986*

Mr Ambassador,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you today and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ireland to the Holy See. This event constitutes a further significant moment in the course of the spiritual ties and cordial by which you are appointed diplomatic relations which unite us.

I thank you for the expression of good wishes which you have conveyed on behalf of your President, Dr Hillery, and I gladly reciprocate with the assurance of my prayerful appreciation and gratitude.

Ireland has a proud record of religious and cultural service to Europe and to the world. The Irish people as a whole show a marked sense of concern for and solidarity with other peoples striving for development, freedom and justice. This, undoubtedly, is one of the great traditions which you have inherited from a long history lived in close familiarity with the values which lie at the centre of our Christian heritage.

Today too, Mr Ambassador, your country is engaged in a committed effort to establish a climate of peace and progress both at home and abroad. The Holy See is pleased to acknowledge Ireland's active role in the cause of development and justice through its participation in international organisations and through the direct involvement of many Irish men and women in programmes of assistance in various parts of the world. And Irish religious personnel represent an extremely important force of spiritual and social good in almost every corner of the globe.

The Church joyfully recognises the special merits of so many sons and daughters of your land in the task of evangelization and in the cultural and social development of other peoples. She is

likewise aware of the profound contribution which the Christian message has afforded to the formation and life of the Irish people. This mutual exchange is part of the core of the Irish experience. It implies mutual responsibilities and opens up channels of understanding and collaboration which it must be our task to promote and intensify.

As Ireland continues to grow in its identity as a nation and as a people, the challenges facing humanity and society in the present circumstances of history place not a few elements for reflection and decision before your fellow-citizens and leaders. In these matters, often affecting the intimate texture of life and society, great responsibility and wisdom is called for. What is required is a discernment of the values that ensure human dignity and advancement.

The Church, irrevocably committed to the service of the human family, seeks in all parts of the world to promote a continuing dialogue with culture in general and within the particular culture of each people. This dialogue seeks to shed light on the paths that lead individuals and society to the fulfilment of life's purposes and possibilities. For this reason the Church addresses the questions which preoccupy people in every age. She does so with a sincere desire to serve the best interests of nations through a vision of the human condition free from unwarranted biases and with respect for the legitimate interests of all. For such a dialogue to proceed with success, it is essential that this respect be fully mutual, and that it give expression to the common quest for what is not merely expedient but is truly conducive to the happiness and advancement of the human community.

It is not possible to speak of Ireland without referring, as you have done, Mr Ambassador, to the tragic situation of Northern Ireland and to the deeply-felt concern of the vast majority of the Irish people for peace and social harmony there. In spite of so many efforts, including the steps taken by your Government, the forces of violence continue to be active and at times seem even to grow stronger. With great pain on my part I recognise that the appeal I made at Drogheda, pleading with the men and women involved to "turn away from the paths of violence and to return to the ways of peace", needs to be continually renewed. I pray that they will realise that although they say they seek justice, "violence only delays the day of justice". On the other hand I am convinced that the authentic spiritual and human qualities of the Irish people as a whole contain the inspiration and strength needed for the victory of human dignity, life and freedom. I would assure you that the Holy See encourages and supports innovative and courageous political and social policies leading to better understanding and greater harmony between all sectors of the population.

Mr Ambassador, I express once more my special closeness to your country's people. It is my ardent hope and prayer that they may live in peace and justice and well-being. You can count upon the assistance and collaboration of all the departments of the Holy See, and I wish you every happiness in the fulfilment of your responsibilities.

May God ever bless your noble land.

*AAS 79 (1987), p. 257-259.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. IX, 2 pp. 625-627.

L'Attività della Santa Sede pp. 678-680.

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