



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

TO H.E. Mr BENGT FRIEDMAN

AMBASSADOR OF SWEDEN TO THE HOLY SEE*Monday, 9 February 1987

Mr Ambassador,

I am happy to accept from Your Excellency the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Sweden. In welcoming you, I wish also to thank you for the cordial greetings which you have conveyed on behalf of His Majesty King Carl XVI Gustaf, and I would ask you please to reciprocate his good wishes.

I appreciate your kind reference to our shared commitment to the ideals of brotherhood and solidarity. There is urgent need to emphasize these ideals in the present context of international relations. In the modern world, obstacles to solidarity abound, obstacles arising from racial prejudice or religious intolerance, or resulting from ideologies and systems which spawn hatred, distrust and conflict. In the face of these obstacles, we must be convinced of the value and real effectiveness of solidarity and fraternal collaboration. Policies can be established and programmes can be designed which will enable the peoples of the world to live in honest relationship and to develop the trusting and fruitful cooperation needed to consolidate the peace which men and women of good will everywhere long for and, as it were, demand as their right. Diplomacy can make an important contribution to the ever wider establishment of international solidarity. For it is the task of diplomats to foster dialogue and mutual understanding. As I said in my Message for the Twentieth World Day of Peace, "This spirit of solidarity is a spirit that is open to dialogue. It finds its roots in truth, and needs truth to develop. It is a spirit that seeks to build up rather than to destroy, to unite rather than to divide" (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II , *Nuntius ob XX diem ad pacem fovendam dicatum, a. D. 1987*, 4, die 8 dec. 1986: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, IX, 2 (1986), 1890). I am pleased to note your reference to disarmament negotiations and to the work of the United Nations Organization. The extent of your country's commitment to such international cooperation is clearly manifested in the generous way in which Sweden has offered assistance to developing countries. I warmly commend this significant record. As you know, the Holy See too looks favourably upon the work of the United Nations in this sphere and would be happy to see far greater cooperation at the international level. International solidarity is not just an expedient recommendation of the practical order. It is a moral necessity. For the human family is one; by the

simple fact of our birth into this world, we share with every other human being the same inheritance and the same eternal destiny. We are all made in the image and likeness of the one God. And it is heartening to observe an ever greater appreciation of this fact, together with a growing awareness of the increasing interdependence between nations and the consequent necessity for international collaboration in pursuing the common good. The friendly diplomatic relations existing between Sweden and the Holy See constitute a valid expression of our shared conviction of the supremacy of understanding, dialogue, peace and collaboration over all forms of division between people and in the realm of international life. My thoughts cannot fail to turn to the long history of Christianity's presence in Sweden, a presence which goes back at least to the first recorded Christian mission at Birka in the year 830. Although the number of Catholics in your country today is small, I am happy that there exists a very favourable climate of understanding and ecumenical endeavour between the various Churches. It is my ardent hope that this form of religious solidarity will grow apace and serve to meet the urgent spiritual needs of our times. Mr Ambassador. I trust that your mission here will be a fruitful one. I assure you that you will receive the cooperation of the Holy See in its fulfilment. May God assist you in your new mission, and upon all the beloved people of Sweden may he bestow his abundant blessings.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. X, 1 pp. 310-312.*

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