



The Holy See

DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II AL PRESIDENTE FEDERALE DELLA

REPUBBLICA D'AUSTRIA S.E. KURT WALDHEIM *Giovedì, 25 giugno 1987* 1. I greet you cordially on your official visit to the Vatican, which you as Head of State of the Republic of Austria are paying to the successor of Peter. Likewise, I greet your wife, the Vice-Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs, with his wife, and all the persons who accompany you together with the Austrian Ambassador to the Holy See. Today's meeting reminds me of my first visit to the United Nations, following the invitation which you extended to me in your capacity as Secretary General of the United Nations, in New York. Your activity in international life, as diplomat and as Foreign Minister of your country, and also during your heavy responsibilities in the world wide organization of the United Nations, was always dedicated to ensuring peace among the peoples. Now you are able to place at the service of the Austrian people, who have elected you as their chief Representative, the professional experience of life that you have gained from this activity. You serve a land that I too esteem highly. 2. In the course of its history, Austria has often had a particular task to carry out in the community of the peoples, in part because of its geographical position in the heart of Europe. For a long period it was the heartland of a territory that left a decisive imprint, as a political and a cultural power, on the face of the European continent. Your land today, lying on the fateful boundary between West and East, is concerned above all with the correct balance of interests in international relations, with the preservation of human rights, with the safeguarding of freedom, and with the promotion of peace. More and more people in our days are coming to see that peace cannot be ensured in the long term by means of mutual terrorization and threats, but only as the fruit of justice. One may not seek peace in a state, and between peoples, at the cost of freedom and human rights. Rather, peace must be at the service of the human person, safeguarding his inviolable dignity and permitting him to develop in all ways. The Republic of Austria is legally constituted in a position of permanent neutrality, and this gives it a particular chance to achieve a true peace, by contributing in an important way to freedom and justice among the peoples. Accordingly, Austria's endeavours for a peaceful resolution of conflicts, its contributions to the peacekeeping initiatives of the United Nations, and to aid refugees, deserve recognition. On this occasion, I must not omit to thank the Republic of Austria especially for the aid that it has given my Polish fellow countrymen in various ways in recent years. To engage oneself in solidarity with those in need at home and abroad is active love of one's neighbour and true fellowship. Austria was able to give this comprehensive aid because, after the Second World War, while preserving the full plurality of free democracy, there was recognition of responsibility for the common good. This recognition led the political forces to such a cohesion that their unity within the land was able to cope with an occupation that lasted several years, and it made possible in 1955 the attainment of full sovereignty with the signing of the constitution of the state. This responsible partnership has characterized the internal politics of your country until the present day, both in the social partnership of the great groups in Austria with common concerns, and also in the cooperation that goes beyond all party barriers and locally-oriented federal structures. 3. Like the recent ad limina visit of

the Austrian bishops, this meeting with you, Mr. President, reminds me again with joy of my pastoral visit to your land in 1983. Your land bears the very deep Christian imprint of a tradition that is almost 2,000 years old, and is even today an important and living member of the worldwide Catholic Church. This is why I am already greatly looking forward to the second pastoral visit, to which the Austrian Bishops' Conference has invited me next year. We can note with satisfaction that the Catholic Church – supported by the arrangements of the Concordat of 1933 and of the succeeding additional agreements – is able to make an important contribution in the social and cultural life of your country. One particular significance of Austria for the life of faith of the Church is seen in musical culture, through which your land is acknowledged to have made a significant contribution to the spiritual and liturgical praise of God. Let us name as examples here only Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Franz Schubert, These artistic works of Church music have brought your land high esteem beyond its own boundaries. Finally, I cannot omit to speak of the great readiness of Austrian Catholic organizations to help in development projects and in relieving world need through Caritas. The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* of the Second Vatican Council begins with the words, "The joy and the hope, the sadness and anxiety of the men of today, especially of the poor and those oppressed in every way, are the joy and the hope, the sadness and anxiety of the disciples of Christ». This solidarity with mankind has inspired the Church from her beginnings, and will continue to determine her activity in the future. The Church is likewise glad to acknowledge every act of responsible service to people throughout the world on the part of other bodies, especially the help given by States. Here too, Austria, with its central position in the fellowship of peoples, has an important significance. May the blessing of God always accompany you, Mr. President, and the Austrian people in this aid in solidarity with mankind, and also in the fruitful development of society and state in the Republic of

Austria.

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