



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE AMBASSADOR OF GREAT BRITAIN
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Tuesday 14 June, 1988

Mr Ambassador,

It is a pleasure to receive Your Excellency as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. I thank you for conveying Her Majesty's courteous greetings and I ask you to give her the assurance of my own good wishes.

As you have stated, thanks to the efforts of your distinguished predecessors and to a number of important initiatives, relations between the Holy See and Great Britain have continued to develop. You have pointed out a number of the issues where we share a common interest and desire to collaborate effectively – issues such as negotiated reductions in nuclear weapons; the means for overcoming drug-trafficking, terrorism and armed conflicts; joint measures aimed at securing peace, development and justice; and efforts to safeguard freedom and basic human rights.

I particularly appreciate your desire to collaborate closely with the Holy See in overcoming divisions of the European continent. As I stated in a recent Apostolic Letter on the occasion of the Millennium of the Baptism of Kievan Rus', "In the differing cultures of the nations of Europe, both in the East and in the West, in music, literature, the visual arts and architecture, as also in modes of thought, there runs a common lifeblood drawn from a single source" (IOANNIS PAULIS PP. II *Euntes in Mundum*, 12). This source and unifying principle is constituted by Europe's Christian roots. This heritage from the past remains both a gift and a responsibility for the future.

At all levels, the search for cooperation and peace in Europe and throughout the world must be built on respect for human rights. The Church, as you know, plays an active role in promoting the

dignity and rights of every person. Accordingly, she encourages all her members to devote themselves generously to this task. She offers them the guidance of her social teaching, the inspiration of faith and the motivating energy of love. Her ultimate aim is the eternal salvation of all people but, at the same time, since she is interested in the liberation of the whole person, she cannot remain indifferent to the concrete conditions of society. She is deeply concerned with the social and physical needs of the human family, especially of its poorest and most defenceless members.

The concerns of my recent Encyclical "*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*", which you mentioned, call for concerted efforts on the part of all nations, based on respect for the dignity of every human person and on the right of all peoples to build a world worthy of man, one that secures the common good of humanity. In many developed countries, including your own, there is increasing public debate on the moral and ethical direction of progress and social programming. Grave questions such as unemployment are seen to have a deep and adverse effect upon the very fabric of society, because they damage or entirely negate the dignity of human life. This is even more so in the case of abortion. Many people are coming to recognize that such matters must be approached on the basis of the ethical principles governing them and not merely as aspects of a social theory or ideology. Nations can only truly safeguard and serve the well-being of their citizens by a constant reference to the demands of justice, moral rectitude and the spiritual dimension of the human person.

I welcome Your Excellency's reference to the intention of your Government to continue to ensure religious education in your schools. The Catholic Church warmly supports this goal. At a meeting earlier this year with a group of Bishops from England, I endorsed precisely this point in the following terms: "It is the Church's firm conviction that a complete education necessarily includes a *religious dimension*. If religion is neglected or set aside in the educational process that forms a nation's heart and soul, then a morality worthy of man will not survive; justice and peace will not endure" (*Ad Episcopos Angliae*, 2, die 29 febr. 1988: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XI, 1 (1988) 528).

Mr Ambassador, in your role as representative of your country to the Holy See, you may count, as your predecessors have done, on the ready collaboration of the various departments with which you will be in contact. I pray that Almighty God will abundantly bless you as you carry out your mission.

I pray too for Her Majesty and the members of the Royal Family and for all the people whom you represent.

*AAS 80 (1988), p. 1784-1786.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XI, 2 pp. 2020-2022.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1988 pp. 512-513.

L'Osservatore Romano 15.6.1988 p.5.

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