



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

TO H.E. Mr GEAROID P. O. BROIN,

THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF IRELAND TO THE HOLY SEE**Monday, 16 December 1991 Mr*

Ambassador, With great pleasure I welcome you to the Vatican for the presentation of the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ireland to the Holy See. I am grateful for the greetings which you have conveyed from Her Excellency President Robinson and I gladly reciprocate with good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the well-being of the Irish people, with whom this Apostolic See has been united by uninterrupted bonds of faith and friendship for over one thousand five hundred years. You have referred to the profound changes taking place in the world with surprising and even alarming rapidity. It is as if the human family had shaken off a sombre and pervading threat, which for decades overshadowed international relations and caused every forecast for the future to be accompanied by pessimism and fear. The world, in fact, is striving to leave behind the negative aspects of its division into opposing blocs. But as it does so, the international community finds itself faced with a host of underlying problems standing in the way of genuine peace and progress. There exists a real danger that the vacuum created by the decline of ideological tensions will be filled by new excesses. The most obvious sign of such excess is the resurgence of the nationalistic tendencies which in some cases have already led to tragic violence and conflicts. These situations clearly undermine the processes of economic development and political agreement which should have followed from the changed relationship between East and West. At the same time, the old problems have not gone away. The distress of millions of victims of hunger and poverty, the enormous imbalance between the more developed nations and the less developed ones, situations of radical injustice and violence, the denial of human and civil rights and freedoms - all this demands urgent attention if the legitimate aspirations of the human family are to be met. Fortunately, there are hopeful signs of the international community's determination to meet the challenges of the present with more effective structures of dialogue and cooperation and an increased sense of the interdependence between countries. In this perspective, the core question facing Europe is not one of development and prosperity alone but one which concerns the very significance and the continuing validity of Europe's historical, cultural and religious experience. What is at stake is the defence and promotion of the positive and permanent values and ideals of European civilization. Your own country, Mr Ambassador, has a distinctive contribution to make to the new Europe which is being formed. Ireland can play a significant role in keeping alive a culture firmly based on the centrality of the human person as the subject of inalienable rights and freedoms, and open to the transcendent dimension of human existence. Just as at difficult times in the past her monks and missionaries brought faith and learning to many parts of Europe, so today she has a "gift" which she has a duty to defend and to share. Ireland's gift, as I indicated when I received the Letters of Credence of your distinguished predecessor, is "the rich humanism which characterizes her people and which springs in the first place from her fidelity to her Christian traditions" (John Paul II, *Address to the New Ambassador of Ireland to the Holy See*, 22 Jan. 1990).

Among the values which occupy an important place in your people's outlook and which need to be considered in all their importance I will mention only these: a keen sense of religious and civic freedom, a demand for equal justice for all, special care for the weaker members of society, a strong and loving family life, and a warmth of hospitality towards others. This spiritual and moral ethos, to which Irish emigrants and missionaries have borne witness in so many parts of the world, continues to be a basic point of reference and source of direction and energy in meeting the challenges now facing Irish society. Modern societies are all faced with similar challenges: among others, to defend life, the family and the sacredness of marriage, to ensure high standards of education, to create opportunities for employment, to uphold principles of accountability and honesty in private and public life, to counteract the social degradation that comes from crime and drug and alcohol abuse. The evils obstructing human development are not merely economic and political. Their roots are above all ethical and moral. The building of a more human and more humane society requires a courageous and generous response to the truth about man and his transcendent destiny. Without a revitalization of essential spiritual resources there cannot be a strong and decisive individual and collective commitment to the common good and to solidarity. Against the background of closer union and cooperation between the peoples of Europe, efforts to bring about a peaceful and voluntary reconciliation between the two communities of northern Ireland, to which Your Excellency has referred, take on new significance and urgency. The violence which continues to plague that Province is sinful and unjustifiable. It is also the expression of outmoded political and social positions, and those who follow this path pursue an unjust and undemocratic struggle. The only real path to peace is the path of respect for human rights, respect for legitimate differences, respect for the rule of law, on the part of everyone. We must continue to hope that the communities involved will work in practical ways to break down the barriers of mind and heart which divide them. Mr Ambassador, I wish you well as you take up your new responsibilities as Ireland's Representative to the Holy See. You may be certain that the various departments of the Roman Curia will be only too willing to cooperate with you in your task. I assure you of my earnest prayers for the well-being of the beloved Irish

people.

*AAS 85 (1993), p. 23-25. *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XIV, 2 pp. 1405-1408. *L'Attività della Santa Sede* 1991 pp. 1066-1068. *L'Osservatore Romano* 17.12.1991 p.7. *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English* 51/52 p.2. © Copyright 1991 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana