



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr. NOH YOUNG PARK
NEW AMBASSADOR OF KOREA TO THE HOLY SEE****

Monday, 22 February 1993

Your Excellency,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you today to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Korea. It is a fitting occasion for us to reaffirm the existence of friendly and cooperative links between your country and the Holy See, links which have steadily been consolidated since Diplomatic Relations were established thirty years ago. I am grateful for the greetings which you conveyed on behalf of His Excellency President Roo Tae Woo, to whom I express my good wishes and renew the assurance of my prayers for peace and harmony among all the Korean people.

Your Excellency has referred to two questions keenly felt by your fellow-citizens, and which are of great importance for everyone concerned with developments in the international field. Those questions have to do with overcoming the division between North and South in your own country, and with creating conditions that will ensure a stable peace in that region of the globe. Both realities are intimately connected since, in an increasingly interdependent world, what happens in one area or country has repercussions far beyond. Northeast Asia is a sensitive area and while it is true that in recent times many threats to peace on a global level have been removed or greatly lessened, nevertheless future stability remains uncertain. The international community must further develop secure guarantees of just and harmonious relations between peoples and States, the foundations of which are already substantially laid out in many International Accords which need to be accepted by all and the effective implementation of which should be verifiable before public opinion.

As a keen observer of world events, the Holy See is encouraged by the increasing awareness among individuals and wide sectors of world opinion of the intrinsic relationship between peace and respect for human rights. Almost twenty-five years ago my predecessor Pope Paul VI wrote: "Peace and Rights are reciprocally cause and effect, the one of the other: Peace favors Rights, and Rights in their turn favor Peace" (Paul VI, *Message on the occasion of the World Day for Peace 1969*, 8 December 1968). Where there is a clear understanding of the worth of every human being, with a corresponding and juridically guaranteed respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, justice and fairness become criteria of human behavior at every level, including the level of national and international politics. In such a view, peace is not just the absence of conflict or the stalemate brought about by the balance of opposing forces. It is a convergence of mind above all regarding what can and should be done for the development of people and the true progress of civilization. As Pope Paul indicated: "Peace must first be in men's minds, so that it can then exist in human events" (Ibid.). Hence, all lovers of peace rejoice in the more frequent and higher level of contacts between North and South Korea, and I concur completely with Your Excellency when you express the hope that reunification will be achieved through love and reconciliation. Love and reconciliation are in fact crowning qualities of mind and heart, and they denote the maturity of a people's self-image and cultural development.

I am well aware of how anxious the Catholics of Korea are to build society on the solid foundations of justice and respect for human dignity. They seek cooperation with people from different religious backgrounds and with all people of good will in the great cause of building bridges of understanding, mutual esteem and common enterprise in the peaceful ordering of life in their own land and in the world, in such a way that even profound differences of outlook and conviction need not stand as obstacles to peace. As believers, they know that peace is a divine gift to be implored, and they therefore pray unceasingly for the reunification of their country, as the proper response to the deepest aspirations of the Korean heart.

The Republic of Korea, Mister Ambassador, has progressively strengthened its democratic and participatory structures and processes. A further step along this path will be the forthcoming inauguration of a new civil administration under the incoming President, Mister Kim Young Sam. I would ask you kindly to assure him of my prayerful best wishes as, in a few days time, he assumes the highest responsibilities in the service of his country.

In the fulfillment of your own duties as your country's Representative, be assured of the ready assistance of the various departments of the Roman Curia. I wish you well during your stay in this City of ageold and ever vital religious, cultural and artistic traditions. Upon you I implore divine protection, and I invoke abundant blessings upon the beloved Korean people.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XVI, 1 p.503-505.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1993 p. 167-169.

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