



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr JAN MARCUSSEN
NEW AMBASSADOR OF DENMARK TO THE HOLY SEE***

Saturday, 19 November 1994 Mr. Ambassador, It gives me great pleasure to accept the Letters of Credence by which Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II appoints you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Denmark to the Holy See. I am grateful to Her Majesty for the greetings which you have conveyed in her name, and I reciprocate with good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the peace and well-being of all the people of your Country. You have referred to the recent dramatic changes which have given birth to new opportunities and challenges in Europe. With the end of an era marked by tension between opposite blocs, wide frontiers of freedom have been opened and every effort must now be made to preclude new forms of oppression, among which we must list ethical relativism and unbridled consumerism (cf. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 19). Today more than ever, a keen sense of responsibility to its spiritual heritage is necessary if the Continent is to remain true to itself. I am firmly convinced that Europe will fulfil its destiny only when it once again becomes a community of nations, sharing a common vision centered on the transcendent value of every human life, on a developed sense of the dignity of the human person, and on respect for human rights. The greatness of Europe was forged in the crucible of Christianity, and it is the life-giving truths of religion, written in the human heart, which must animate the Continent's future. In order to secure the fruits of authentic civilization in Europe and throughout the world - victory over injustice, selfishness and hatred - it is essential to strengthen the fundamental and indispensable unit of every social order: the family. The United Nations Organization has recognized the significance of the family for all forms of cultural, political and economic development by declaring this to be the *International Year of the Family*, a project which the Catholic Church gladly embraced as her own. The integral development of a free and just society requires strong families established through the marriage of man and woman. Indeed, "it is the duty of the State to encourage and protect the authentic institution of the family, respecting its structure and its innate and inalienable rights" (John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1994*, 5 [8 Dec. 1993]). Confusion concerning the true identity of marriage and the family would necessarily undermine the foundations of social life. Whenever the truth about the family is compromised, moral decline follows and cultural decadence inevitably results. As Denmark prepares to host the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, a meeting in which the Holy See is pleased to participate, my thoughts turn to the specific contributions which the Catholic Church can offer to the international community in the light of the wisdom she has received from her Divine Founder and from her long experience down the centuries. As a result of recent scientific advances, a way of life dependent upon modern technology now spans the entire globe, offering the possibility of closer links between all human societies. Every person, culture and society is now, at least at some levels, interdependent. Given this situation, it has become even clearer that only respect for the innate dignity of every human

person, from conception until natural death, without distinction of ethnic, social or religious condition, can serve as the solid basis of justice and peace among peoples. It is a pleasure for me to acknowledge Denmark's distinguished reputation in the world community for stimulating social and economic development in countries still struggling to achieve material progress. In this I see a concrete application of the fundamental conviction which in Catholic social doctrine underlies the obligation of solidarity, namely that "the goods of this world are *originally meant for all*" (cf. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 42). While every State must accept the primary responsibility for its own development, it is also true that the unity of the human family imposes on the wealthier nations a duty of working for the common good of the less fortunate. If the lofty goal of true international solidarity is to be realized, moderation and simplicity will have to replace the inordinate consumption of earthly goods and resources, and the creation of artificial needs (cf. John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1993*, 5 [8 Dec. 1992]). Moreover, the industrialized countries of the North have other serious responsibilities. Nothing would be more tragic than to export to the developing countries patterns of behaviour rooted in an exaggerated individualism. New forms of imperialism which would seek, even unconsciously, to impose values opposed to the true good of individuals and nations must be firmly resisted. The Catholic Church in Denmark, although small in numbers, has a long and venerable tradition of service to the Nation. She has striven to fashion a culture of life by educating the young, caring for the sick and assisting the poor and the marginalized. Now more than ever Catholics are being called to assist the moral renewal of society through the witness of their faith, and through the contribution of their spiritual and intellectual tradition. Mr. Ambassador, it is my hope that, as you undertake your responsibilities, the bonds of understanding and friendship between the Holy See and Denmark will be increasingly strengthened. You can be assured that the various offices of the Roman Curia will always be ready to assist you in fulfilling your mission. Upon yourself and all the beloved people of your Nation I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty

God.

* *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XVII, 2 pp.806-809. *L'Attività della Santa Sede* 1994 pp. 860-862. *L'Osservatore Romano* 20.11.1994 p.5. *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly edition in English* n.48 p.10. © Copyright 1994 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana