



The Holy See

***DISCOURS DU SAINT-PÈRE JEAN-PAUL II
À M. JOZSEF BRATINKA, NOUVEL AMBASSADEUR
D'HONGRIE PRÈS LE SAINT-SIÈGE****

Lundi 6 février 1995

Mr. Ambassador,

1 I am glad to greet you and to welcome you to Rome on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Hungary to the Holy See.

2. I thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for the cordial sentiments you have just expressed: I am particularly touched by your words of esteem for the activity of the Holy See and of the Successor of Peter in international life. On this solemn occasion, you have reminded me of my Apostolic Visit to your country. I still cherish vivid memories of my meetings with the authorities and the people of Hungary, as well as of the religious celebrations which enabled me to be united with the Catholic Church in your country. I would be grateful if you would convey my deferential greetings to the President of the Republic, with my best wishes to all those who have the lofty responsibility of serving the nation, as well as to all the Hungarian people.

3. You have called to mind the Christian roots of Hungary, which has preserved its cultural, humanistic and religious identity from its foundation to our time, even during the somber periods in its recent history. How is it possible not to mention the Catholic kings, St Stephen and St Ladislaus, who lived the ideal of sainthood while tirelessly devoting themselves to organizing the public life of the new State? These emblematic figures of your noble nation witness to the Church's tireless involvement in social life at the service all people. Indeed, the Church's social teaching contributes to guiding the endeavours of those who labour for the development of democratic life and international relations. On this subject, it would be appropriate to stress that the principles of Catholic social teaching are not intended to define a social system, but to recall the individual and

collective values that are the basis of all life in society, especially the principles of justice and solidarity: the latter make it possible to put a country's entire wealth at the service of the whole national community, and to make its citizens share in a common responsibility, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity written into the new Constitution of the Hungarian Republic. In this period of transition everyone is also called to make the necessary effort to attain greater spiritual and material well-being. Catholics are eager to be involved in social life. They are ready to promote fraternal relations with all their compatriots and to contribute to building a democratic life together. In fact the Catholic Church's vocation to proclaim the Gospel is mainly expressed through the service of her brothers and sisters. I take this opportunity, through you, to greet warmly the Catholic community present in your country.

4. The family has a key position at the heart of society, for it is the first school for the moral education and social training of youth. You are also aware, Mr. Ambassador, of the attention the Church pays to education in Hungary, thanks to the Catholic schools in particular. You have been pleased to refer to the new provisions your country has made regarding religious freedom and the aid allocated by the authorities to the Church's educational and charitable institutions. In this area, the Holy See appreciates the gestures which your Government has made to provide the different institutions and religious congregations with the necessary conditions to fulfil their educational role and to offer the spiritual and moral formation to which many of your young compatriots aspire. I express my sincere gratitude to those who agreed to make these courageous decisions.

Rest assured that Catholics who dedicate themselves to youth are aware that they serve the whole nation by co-operating conscientiously in the education of its sons and daughters, who, in the future, will guide the country's destiny. The Bishops, and with them the clergy and all the faithful, are proud to belong to the Republic of Hungary; they hope to make a real contribution to it, each in his own capacity. I am overjoyed at the understanding reached between the Pastors of the Catholic Church and the civil authorities, not only to help compensate for the injustices of the last decades, especially with regard to Church property, but to finalize the legislation concerning respect for religious freedom and the Catholic Church's specific mission in Hungary in the areas of education, charitable activity and the media.

5. The Hungarian people have a great sense of individual and social freedom, which prompts them to open their frontiers, to participate in international life and to give minorities the right support in a spirit of co-operation and solidarity. There is recognition of the legitimate aspiration to a fraternal spirit that is opposed to introversion a fraternal spirit sustained by the fundamental values of peace, respect for the dignity of the human being and the dignity of peoples. You yourself have toiled since 1990 for this, especially as head of your country's parliamentary delegation at the Council of Europe, and in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe which has recently become an autonomous Organization. By fostering dialogue between different human groups, the authorities offer each citizen the opportunity to participate in the life of the nation and to contribute to building peace. This path of dialogue, to which the Holy See attaches special

importance, is the only way which respects man, peoples and ethnic and cultural minorities.

6. As you begin your mission, I offer you my best wishes. I am convinced, Mr. Ambassador, that your presence here will strengthen the deep and trusting bonds which have already existed for a thousand years between Hungary and the Holy See, relations which in this century were threatened by historical events.

You may be certain that you will always receive an attentive welcome and cordial understanding from my co-workers, in order better to fulfil your task.

I wholeheartedly invoke an abundance of divine blessings upon Your Excellency and upon the leaders and people of Hungary.

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