



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADORS ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE****

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 25 March 1995*

Your Excellencies,

1. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you today to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of your respective countries: *Armenia, Cyprus, Lesotho, New Zealand, Norway, Rwanda and Thailand*. I take this occasion to reaffirm my esteem and friendship for the peoples which you represent, each one with its own history, its cultural and religious traditions, its aspirations and hopes in the face of the enormous challenges confronting individual nations and the whole of humanity at the end of the twentieth century. I extend a particular welcome to the first Representative accredited to the Holy See of the newly independent Republic of Armenia. For each one of you I pray that your term as Ambassador will be an opportunity to deepen your understanding of the Church's inescapable commitment to serving the human family, a charge which she received from her Divine Founder Jesus Christ.

2. As diplomats you are keen observers of the changing international situation and of the direction which the world is taking. The tide of events of the last few years has certainly brought a lessening of tensions on a global scale. The international community could have an historic opportunity to use for better causes, especially for the cause of development and solidarity, the human and economic resources which, in a world divided into opposing blocs, had been directed to security and the arms race. Instead, we are witnesses of the sad fact that in every continent regional, ethnic and economic interests continue to kindle fires of hostility and outright conflict. The presence here of the Rwandan Ambassador reminds us of what immense suffering that country has been subjected to, and of the threat of further bloodshed which hangs over the peoples of the region. The international community has a greater need than ever for diplomatic expertise, for *men*

and women who are committed to finding ways of stimulating and sustaining initiatives aimed at establishing trust and bringing about reconciliation between nations and peoples.

3. In the work for peace, development and progress, the Holy See has a role and competence which are unlike the responsibility exercised by civil society and political authorities. But there are innumerable points of contact and of mutual co-operation, starting with the fact that wherever the Church is active it is the same human beings whom she and the political community seek to serve. In fulfilling her spiritual mission, the Church is present in the temporal order to proclaim the dignity of the human person, and to educate consciences to the truths and values essential to building a just society that respects every individual's transcendent worth and destiny. Through its presence in the international community the Holy See seeks to *defend the very structure of human rights*, including the fundamental right to religious freedom, to foster an ever greater awareness of the moral and ethical obligations of political, social and economic power, and to remind the international community of the needs and sufferings of the weak and unprotected.

4. In each of your countries, your Catholic fellow-citizens are led by their faith to love and esteem their homeland and their national heritage. In their faith they find inspiration to co-operate with all men and women of good will in serving the common good. In most cases the Catholic community is widely involved in educational, healthcare and social services for the benefit of all. Everywhere, *the Church wishes to communicate a vision of hope*: she believes that with God's help the evil in human hearts can be overcome, the struggle against injustice can be won, and universal brotherhood – which does not mean uniformity but mutual understanding, respect and solidarity – can become a reality.

5. I dare to invite you, distinguished Ambassadors, even as you serve as your respective countries' Representatives to the Holy See, to *place yourselves*, in a sense, *at the service of all humanity*. Your sensitivity to the major ills afflicting so many of our fellow human beings will make you more fully aware of what can and should be done by your countries and by international institutions for the genuine development and well-being of the peoples of the world. The recent Summit in Copenhagen was a significant step in that direction. May the Year 2000 see humanity more wisely and solidly embarked on the way of justice and peace!

Upon yourselves and your families, and upon the peoples which you represent, I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

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