



The Holy See

***DISCOURS DU SAINT-PÈRE JEAN-PAUL II
À S.Exc. M. JEAN-LOUIS LUCET,
NOUVEL AMBASSADEUR DE FRANCE PRÈS LE SAINT-SIÈGE****

Lundi 13 novembre 1995

Mr. Ambassador,

I welcome you with great pleasure on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador of France to the Holy See. As you have said, and as the President of the Republic was kind enough to emphasize in the message he had the courtesy to send me last month, the relations of the Holy See and the French Republic are distinguished by trust and are called to develop in the direction of an ever closer and more harmonious collaboration.

Mr. Ambassador, you wished to recall that the defence of true values has not ceased to be a constant concern of the Holy See. I would like to thank you and the authorities you represent for your renewed attention to the Apostolic See's mission, some of whose most striking aspects, such as the defence of the rights of individuals and peoples and the promotion of justice, freedom and peace, you have just mentioned.

At a time when man risks being enslaved by the technologies that God has allowed him to invent, it is important to repeat, with the whole humanist tradition of which your country can be justly proud, that «science without conscience only ruins the soul». Thus the positions recently taken by the Holy See at the Beijing Conference had the sole objective of helping the international agencies to have legislative measures that are truly at the service of the development of every person and the family institution which is still the mainspring of social life. The Successor of Peter and the Church as a whole will never be resigned to seeing diminished or reduced to a mere object of experimentation the spiritual, personal and social dimension of the human being for whom Christ gave his life. It is in this spirit that the Church lives her prophetic mission, appealing to what you

have just called «spiritual resistance», and «courage in the defence of values». There is sure to be no lack of misunderstanding of the Church's position, but it will always be indispensable to help man to remain faithful to his vocation as a spiritual being, made for life by God and for God. In this spirit I acknowledge the efforts made in your country to help people and families in difficulty. In adversity, it is important that all the members of the national community demonstrate ever greater solidarity and charity, responding to human distress with open hearts.

Due to its history and geographical position your country is open to the world, especially to the African continent. Many of your compatriots left their homeland to go to the aid of developing countries, to guide them in their quest for an increasingly autonomous and democratic social life and to give them the necessary technical, health care and educational assistance for their fulfilment. Bishop Eugene de Mazenod whom I will soon canonize, is an example of this. The long tradition of the French presence in Africa has made your country particularly sensitive to the suffering of peoples torn by civil war and numerous ethnic conflicts. Most especially, I do not forget the efforts made at the time of the tragedy in Rwanda to aid the civilian victims. The Holy See, which makes its own contribution to the development of the African continent, knows it can count on the French Government and on France's generosity in continuing to provide aid to developing countries. In the long term, aid and the training of indigenous peoples are a fitting response for strengthening peace and for settling the ethnic conflicts that are still staining Africa with blood.

It is impossible to pass over in silence the murderous conflicts that have been taking place on our doorstep for too many years. The most fundamental dignity of men and women is being trampled upon. In this regard, I recall the recent interventions and courageous commitment of the French authorities and their compatriots to offering generous assistance to the tormented peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina, encouraging the search for peace which must henceforth be an urgent priority for the whole international community. Lasting peace cannot be achieved unless peoples' aspirations are really taken into account unless harmony among the cultures is fostered.

This year the Church in France is celebrating the centenary of several of its prestigious universities, which have enabled it to make French culture more widely known on all the continents and especially in Rome. You have just mentioned the many establishments here which bear the torch of your country's intellectual life. You are aware of the Church's commitment to the education of youth and to scientific research, which is part of the human and spiritual training of future generations and which enables our contemporaries to discover the meaning of personal and community life, as well as their specific responsibility in the management of world affairs. In this way, French Catholics are keen to participate actively in public life and to serve their country with respect for the different viewpoints of which the French social fabric is woven, relying on the basic values which since the beginning of the Christian age have formed the common treasure of the French people. In fact, the cultural and spiritual riches of France, and more broadly speaking of Europe, rest on the meaning and dignity of every human life, on the place of the family in building society. Today more than ever, now that the links between the generations are tending to

disintegrate, if young people are to develop intellectually, psychologically and spiritually, they need a stable home where they receive affection and where they learn from the witness of their elders and through education the necessary values for their personal life and for a harmonious life with all the people who make up society. This is why I hope that the Catholic Church aware of her responsibilities in the search for the common good, will increasingly find her place in French society, and I particularly hope that the media will take care to help make her true face known.

I do not forget that your country is the seat of an important European institution and that for many years it has continued to develop its tradition of openness to other countries on the continent. I would like to acknowledge the efforts to build Europe, a Europe that is open to nations which are just emerging from the great trial of communism. The latter have need of vigorous support from States with a strong democratic tradition in order to achieve the necessary social reforms, to create the appropriate structures and to give their citizens the civic education they need if they are to take the res publica in hand. It is Europe's strength to be able to unite peoples, with legitimate respect for national sovereignty and specific cultures, by co-operating in the many areas of ordinary life as well as in the development of solidarity and charity. By resolutely setting out in this direction, Europe will open the way to a new age of peace throughout the continent.

Over the next two years, I will have the deep joy of returning to your country. The 1,500th anniversary of the baptism of Clovis will provide the opportunity to remember the Christian roots of your nation, its deep vocation and the greatness of the saints whose birth it has witnessed. France, moulded by the proclamation of the Gospel message must continue to ensure each of its children freedom of conscience and the possibility of direct access to the sources of its Tradition. My meeting with youth will enable me to invite them to live their daily lives with renewed enthusiasm by telling them again that Christ trusts in them, that he calls them to be active members of society and the Church, responsible for their private life and for their own future and that of their country.

Through you, Mr. Ambassador, I would again like to tell the President of the Republic and all your compatriots how deeply I share in their concern and desire to build a society where each may have a place, whatever his sensitivities and belief, but where all may be actively involved in building their common home.

Mr. Ambassador, you are now heir to a long tradition. Your name has been added to the list of prestigious Ambassadors of France. I offer you my best wishes for the success of your mission. I can assure you that those who work with me will do their best to give you personally and all the staff of your Embassy whatever help you need. And as I ask God to sustain France's projects and aspirations, I most cordially grant my Apostolic Blessing to you, your loved ones and all those who are called to assist you in your office.

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