



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr DIMITAR MIRČEV, FIRST AMBASSADOR OF
THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 16 November 1995

Mr Ambassador,

I am very pleased to welcome you to the Vatican today as you present the Letters of Credence appointing you the first Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to the Holy See. I likewise receive with pleasure the good wishes which you have conveyed on behalf of His Excellency President Kiro Gligorov. As the President convalesces after the recent attempt on his life, I would ask you to assure him of my prayers for his full return to health and vigour.

In the international community, the Holy See constantly defends and emphasizes the ideals of harmony and of solidarity, ideals based on the reality of our membership in the one human family. Today, unfortunately, the attainment of these ideals faces a great many obstacles: they are hindered by racial prejudice or religious intolerance, by ideologies and systems which sow distrust, rivalry and conflict. It is therefore all the more important that policies, initiatives and programmes developed at the international, national and regional levels should consistently respect all groups and sectors of the population, upholding the dignity and rights of all, and especially of minorities. We have only to look at the tragic events which have overtaken some of your neighbours in the Balkans to understand that no effort must be spared to ensure that the peoples of the world live in friendship and develop the trust and cooperation necessary to consolidate the peace which men and women of goodwill everywhere long for and which they demand as their right. The diplomatic relations existing between your country and the Holy See represent the expression of a shared conviction that understanding, dialogue, cooperation and peace must supplant all forms of division, force, violence and coercion. I am certain that we share the hope that the discussions

now taking place between the parties involved will bring a prompt and lasting solution to the horrific violence that has plagued the Balkans for the past four years.

In effect, the task of ensuring peace incumbent upon the international community consists fundamentally in the promotion of the human person, of all men and women, in the fullness of their dignity, rights and responsibilities. The Church views this as an integral part of her religious and humanitarian mission. As the Second Vatican Council expressed it, she fulfils this task "by her healing and elevating impact on the dignity of the person, by the way in which she strengthens the seams of human society and imbues the everyday activity of men and women with a deeper meaning and importance" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 40).

As recently as last month I had the opportunity to address the 50th General Assembly of the United Nations Organization in New York. I went there "not as one who exercises temporal power... nor as a religious leader seeking special privileges for his community", but as "a witness: a witness to human dignity, a witness to hope, a witness to the conviction that the destiny of all nations lies in the hands of a merciful Providence" (John Paul II, *Address at the Fiftieth General Assembly of the United Nations Organization*, 17 [5 Oct. 1995]). It is precisely this same belief which characterizes the activity of the Holy See in the sphere of international diplomacy. In conformity with the mission of the Church, the Holy See is present in this forum of dialogue not for political purposes, but as a witness to the principles and values which underlie the common good of the whole human family. As I said to President Gligorov and the other national representatives who came to Rome to celebrate the Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius earlier this year, civil society and the ecclesial community are called to engage in this work with courage and perseverance, on two different levels, but with equal responsibility (cf. John Paul II, *Address to the President of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, 2 [26 May 1995]).

As Your Excellency has pointed out, Christianity has a long and venerable history in your country, and although the number of Catholics is small, one notes with great satisfaction the existence of a climate of understanding which favours ecumenical cooperation and exchange between the various Churches. It is my ardent hope that this form of religious solidarity will continue to grow and will help meet the urgent spiritual needs of our time. I am likewise confident that our newly established diplomatic relations will strengthen this climate of cooperation.

Mr Ambassador, a commitment to work for a more just, humane and peaceful world is the basis of the good relations which exist between your country and the Holy See. At the beginning of your mission, I assure you of the Holy See's full cooperation as you fulfil your responsibilities. May Almighty God assist you and bestow upon the noble people of your land his abundant blessings.

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