



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS WHO HAD COME
TO CONGRATULATE HIM ON HIS 80TH BIRTHDAY****

Friday, 19 May 2000

1. I am moved and grateful to address you, the heads of the diplomatic missions accredited to the Holy See, who have come here to offer me your best wishes on my 80th birthday.

Prof. Giovanni Galassi, your Dean, has spoken on your behalf with a courteous thoughtfulness which touched me deeply. I thank him for the sentiments he expressed; I gladly accept them and offer them to God, the supreme Author of life and of every other good.

In greeting you, Your Excellencies, I also greet your families and co-workers, the authorities and the people of your countries. You know that they have a special place in the Pope's heart, thanks to the intense and continual personal contacts established over the years through private audiences, general meetings and my numerous apostolic visits.

You have come here to thank God with me for his gift of a long life, and to confirm once again the expectations of peace, of the values that give meaning to human life and of the Bishop of Rome's efforts for the advancement and defence of the dignity of every person and every people.

Your spiritual closeness is precious to me and enables me to include you in the prayer I offer with the psalmist who fervently exclaimed: "You have multiplied, O Lord my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you! Were I to proclaim and tell of them, they would be more than can be numbered" (*Ps 39:5*).

2. The gift of life! Yes, life is a gift that springs from an act of love. It is with love, then, that it must be accepted, respected, cultivated, promoted in every way and defended when it is threatened. I have lived my 80 years in a century which has known unprecedented attacks on life, but at the

same time sublime witnesses on its behalf. Throughout my pontificate, encouraged by the words of the Apostle Paul to Timothy, "be urgent in season and out of season" (2 *Tm* 4:2), I have often relied on your generous collaboration in order to convey to the Heads of State of the entire world my appeals for the respect and promotion of life at its various stages and with its multiple requirements.

The expectations of which you are the ambassadors encourage me in the daily fulfilment of my ministry on the Chair of Peter. After 20 centuries of history, the Church, "pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 *Tm* 3:15), feels called more than ever to accept God's plan for humanity, to hear the voice raised from the different societies, cultures and civilizations of the whole world, and to perceive their deepest needs so that she might serve them.

Your Excellencies, I cordially thank you again for honouring me in this solemn way on a personal occasion in my life.

Kindly convey my respectful gratitude to the authorities you represent, so many of whom have sent me appreciated expressions of their best wishes and gratitude.

With these sentiments, I willingly invoke almighty God's abundant blessings on you and your missions.

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