



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR  
OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS  
TO THE HOLY SEE\***

*Monday, 23 October 2000*

*Mr Ambassador,*

1. I am pleased to receive Your Excellency as you present the Letters by which Her Majesty Queen Beatrix accredits you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of The Netherlands to the Holy See.

I warmly thank you, Mr Ambassador, for bringing me the respectful greetings of Her Majesty Queen Beatrix, and I would be grateful in return if you would assure her of my best wishes for herself and for her mission at the service of the kingdom. I particularly appreciate your address to me; it shows your interest and, through you, your country's interest in several important events of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, in which Christians are called to strengthen and renew their spiritual life so that they will be more and more committed to building social life beside their brothers and sisters, thus giving an ever stronger witness to the importance of human, moral and Christian values. The participation of your country's young people in [\*World Youth Day\*](#) enabled them to express their faith and to discover that other young people live the values of the Gospel as they do. They left here transformed by this ecclesial experience, which they will doubtless put into practice in their country.

2. As you very appropriately stress, the moral value of respect for others is essential at all levels of interpersonal relations. In fact, if our contemporaries are to have trust in the various institutions of civil society, it is most important that they know they are respected and that their rights are fully recognized. The most important of these rights is the dignity of every human life in the various stages of a person's existence, and religious freedom, which is a fundamental element of freedom of conscience. This is true for the future of all society, which cannot enact norms that demean the most basic respect owed to every human being, for man remains the centre of social life in all circumstances. These various aspects of moral life are important elements for peace and harmony within a nation and between peoples. Indeed, how could one expect to establish peace while disregarding people's dignity?

You also know the Catholic Church's concern for marriage as a fundamental human reality and as the basic cell of society. No other form of interpersonal relations can be considered equivalent to this natural relationship between a man and a woman, who bring children to life through their love. We must remember that every society needs basic structures if it is to be built on solid, objective foundations.

3. I particularly appreciate your attention to the phenomena of poverty in the world and to the growing disparities between rich and poor countries. Many times during this Jubilee Year I have asked national authorities to think of showing stronger solidarity to the poorest countries, especially by reducing their external debt. Particularly significant decisions have already been taken in this regard, which I am delighted with, while calling for further action in this direction. It is also important, as a matter of equity, that the nations producing raw materials be able to enjoy international development and that the benefits do not accrue only to those which transform these raw materials or trade in them. The economy must be at the service of all men and women, to enable them to live and to have their rightful place in society. It is also an essential element in the cause of peace. Indeed, nations which are subject to the laws of the international market without enjoying its benefits experience a certain number of social and institutional imbalances, which can only provoke conflict. At the same time, the advancement of peoples must be the concern of all.

Development aid presupposes sharing at all levels and serious follow-up to the projects undertaken. In fact, to accompany the growth of a people is to enable them to acquire the necessary training and means so that tomorrow they can be the protagonists and principal agents of their own progress, in a sound relationship with other countries in the concert of nations. I salute the efforts made in this regard by Europe, to which your country belongs, while inviting the continent's leaders to continue and to intensify their action towards poor countries and regions of conflict, especially in Africa and the Middle East. It is important that situations of tension not be allowed to continue, as we have experienced elsewhere, for this will make it difficult to resolve the conflicts and in the future will compromise a good organization of civil society and national institutions.

4. Through your good offices, Mr Ambassador, I would like to greet the Catholic Church in your country; I encourage the Pastors and faithful in their mission of explicitly proclaiming the Gospel to everyone and in their participation in social life among their brothers and sisters, and I invite them to make significant gestures at the ecumenical level, while respecting the faith of each community. My respectful greetings also go to Her Majesty Queen Beatrix, to the entire Royal Family, to all the civil and religious authorities, and to all the Dutch people, to whom I offer my wishes for happiness and prosperity, asking the Lord to assist them in their personal, family and civic life.

As you begin your mission as the representative of the Kingdom of The Netherlands to the Apostolic See, I offer you my best wishes. Be assured, Mr Ambassador, that those who work with me will always give you a warm welcome and understanding help for carrying out the mission entrusted to you.

I ask God to send his gracious blessings upon you, upon your loved ones, upon your colleagues at the embassy and upon all your compatriots.

