



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR
OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA TO THE HOLY SEE****

Thursday, 14 March 2002

Mr. Ambassador,

With pleasure I welcome you to the Vatican and receive the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Korea to the Holy See. I am most grateful for the greetings you bear from President Kim Dae-jung, and I ask you kindly to convey to him my cordial best wishes. I assure the Government and all the citizens of Korea of my deep esteem, and I offer my prayers for the good of the nation, whose splendid hospitality to me on my visits in 1984 and 1989 I have not forgotten.

Your land, Mr. Ambassador, is at a very delicate stage of relations between North and South, and we must hope that the recent evidence of goodwill and progress, however tenuous, will be allowed to mature and will not be hampered by concerns not directly related to the well-being of the Korean people as a whole. As you yourself have noted, there has been a significant shift on the peninsula as the Governments of Seoul and Pyongyang move towards the reconciliation of the entire Korean nation, whatever form the political settlement may eventually take. This is a difficult and complex process with important implications for the region and the world as a whole.

It is true that in an ever more interdependent world no region can avoid being profoundly influenced by the larger context of global events and relations, but it is no less true that what happens in one country has immediate repercussions on others. Precisely for this reason the international community needs to find effective ways to balance all the forces at work in the international arena, where business, financial and media entities increasingly exercise some of the authority which once belonged exclusively in the area of public and political life.

The shifting configuration of the international community presents a great challenge to diplomacy's function and mission, the very art which you, Mr. Ambassador, are called to exercise on behalf of your country. Because of changes in the relationship between business and government, for instance, foreign relations and trade often merge. This is perhaps inevitable, but it runs the risk of focussing merely on the economy and reducing relations between nations and peoples to commercial transactions motivated almost exclusively by profit and expediency. Diplomacy needs to uphold its high ideal of serving the integral development of peoples and the common good of the entire human family, as it is intended to do. Diplomacy has a substantial role to play in ensuring that international relations and policies are all based upon a sound and enlightened understanding of the human person and human society such as that found in the founding Charter of the United Nations Organization, and in particular in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

In this context, the Catholic Church is present and active in the international forum in order to serve the integral development of peoples, as the Gospel commands. You are fully aware, Mr Ambassador, that at the heart of the Church there lies an ethic of communion between individuals, peoples and their communities and institutions. It is her long experience of such an ethic that gives the Church expertise in the workings of that dialogue and solidarity so necessary at this critical time in history. To speak of dialogue and solidarity is implicitly to echo what I stressed in this year's *Message for the World Day of Peace*, to which you yourself have referred: that there can be no peace without justice and no justice without forgiveness. The Catholic Church in Korea is deeply committed to bearing witness to the inseparability of justice, forgiveness and peace, in order to help all Koreans to pursue the path of dialogue and solidarity, which alone will lead to a new era of concord.

Mr. Ambassador, as you assume your high responsibilities within the diplomatic community accredited to the Holy See, I offer you my best wishes for the success of your mission and assure you that the various offices of the Roman Curia will always be ready to assist you in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon yourself and the beloved Korean people I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

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