



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI TO THE AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE*

Thursday, 30 September 1976

Mr Ambassador,

The cordial warmth of your words, the optimism they show, the high consideration in which you hold the mission of the Holy See and of the Church, give us deep satisfaction. We thank you warmly for this testimony and we entrust to you the care of expressing to the President of the French Republic our gratitude for the noble sentiments which you interpret.

Your remarks find in us a more profound echo in that we have always regarded the country you represent with sympathy and trust. Not only do we venerate the influence of so many of its sons in the past, but we are greatly interested in the part that your people can contribute today to the world community and to the vitality of the Church. Everything that contributes or will contribute to the progress of the human spirit, in search of culture and even more of wisdom and supreme values, to respect for human life and dignity in all its forms, to moderation of the race for material prosperity through real solidarity with the underprivileged, to loosening of the knots of conflicts where they are dangerously taut, to replacement of the proliferation of arms with the perspective of development, to encouragement of the effort of young nations, to promotion of mutual help instead of selfish withdrawal, of understanding, détente – or to sum up in one word real peace – all that honours a country, gives rise to the assent and encouragement of the Church, and nourishes men's hope. We greatly appreciated the way Your Excellency qualified this hope "to replace the causes that divide men with reasons for coming together". This is true of nations sitting at the table of international Conferences; it is true in particular of the peoples of Europe who have a specific testimony to give in these fields, and we are happy to know the concern of France and its Government with this matter.

We wish your compatriots themselves the quality of life, the quality of happiness, to which they

aspire, and which will be the fruit of their inventive courage, their national solidarity and their attachment to human and spiritual values. A civilization is great only through its soul. And there we are sure that convinced Catholics can make an excellent contribution. Recent facts have shown the interest and even the passion of a very wide section of public opinion as regards Church problems. May our sons of France, who know our affection, respond to this expectation in a worthy way, through the depth of their faith, their moral rectitude, their evangelical generosity, their cohesion with the living Tradition of the Church, in communion with their Bishops and with this Apostolic See, the guarantor and sign of unity for all Christ's disciples!

You will now be the attentive witness of this vitality of the Church and of the particular efforts of the Holy See, as you will be the spokesman of your Government. You have our fervent wishes for your mission. And we implore the blessings and the assistance of Almighty God for your dear country and its leaders.

*ORa n.42 p.3.