



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr HAN HONG-SOON
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA TO THE HOLY SEE****

Thursday, 21 October 2010

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Korea to the Holy See. I would like to express my gratitude for the good wishes that you bring from President Lee Myung-bak, whose visit to the Vatican last year I recall with much pleasure. Indeed, His Excellency's visit served to deepen the very cordial relations that have existed for almost half a century between your country and the Holy See. Kindly convey my cordial greetings to His Excellency and to the Government, and assure them of my continued prayers for all the people of Korea.

It is encouraging to note the remarkable economic growth that your country has experienced in recent years, which has transformed Korea from a net recipient of aid into a donor country. Such a development would be inconceivable without a remarkable degree of industry and generosity on the part of the Korean people, and I take this opportunity to pay tribute to their achievement. At the same time, as your President pointed out during his visit to the Vatican, there are dangers involved in rapid economic growth which can all too easily bypass ethical considerations, with the result that the poorer elements in society tend to be excluded from their rightful share of the nation's prosperity. The financial crisis of recent years has exacerbated the problem, but it has also focused attention on the need to renew the ethical foundations of all economic and political activity. I wish to encourage your Government in its commitment to ensure that social justice and care for the common good grow side by side with material prosperity, and I assure you that the Catholic Church in Korea is ready and willing to work with the Government as it seeks to promote these worthy goals.

Indeed, the commitment of the local Church to work for the good of society is well illustrated by the great variety of apostolates in which it is engaged. By means of its network of schools and its educational programmes it contributes greatly to the moral and spiritual formation of the young. Through its work for interreligious dialogue it seeks to break down barriers between peoples and to foster social cohesion based on mutual respect and growth in understanding. In its charitable outreach it seeks to assist the poor and the needy, particularly refugees and migrant workers who so often find themselves on the margins of society. In all these ways, the local Church helps to nurture and promote the values of solidarity and fraternity that are essential for the common good of any human community, and I acknowledge with gratitude the appreciation shown by the Government for the Church's involvement in all these areas.

Furthermore, the Church "has a public role over and above her charitable and educational activities" (*Caritas in Veritate*, 11). It is a role that involves proclaiming the truths of the Gospel, which continually challenge us to look beyond the narrow pragmatism and partisan interests that can so often condition political choices, and to recognize the obligations incumbent upon us in view of the dignity of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God. This requires of us an unambiguous commitment to defend human life at every stage from conception to natural death, to promote stable family life in accordance with the norms of the natural law and to build peace and justice wherever there is conflict. The importance that your Government attaches to our diplomatic relations demonstrates its recognition of the Church's prophetic role in these areas, and I thank you for the willingness you have expressed, on behalf of the Government, to continue to work with the Holy See in order to promote the common good of society.

In this context I should like to express the Holy See's appreciation for the active role played by the Republic of Korea within the international community. By promoting the peace and stability of the peninsula, as well as the security and economic integration of nations throughout the Asia-Pacific region, through its extensive diplomatic links with African countries, and especially by hosting next month's G20 Summit in Seoul, your Government has given ample proof of its role as an important player on the world stage, and has helped to guarantee that the process of globalization will be directed by considerations of solidarity and fraternity. Under "the guidance of charity in truth", the Holy See is eager to cooperate with all efforts to steer the powerful forces that shape the lives of millions towards that "civilization of love" whose seed God has planted in every people, in every culture" (*Caritas in Veritate*, 33).

Your Excellency, you have spoken of the Congress of Asian Catholic Laity that took place in Seoul in early September under the auspices of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. I too see in this important event a clear sign of the fruitful cooperation that already exists between your country and the Holy See and that bodes well for the future of our relations. It was only right that the Congress's focus was on the lay faithful who, as you have pointed out, not only sowed the first seeds of the Gospel on Korean soil but bore witness in great numbers to their firm faith in Christ through the shedding of their blood. I am confident that, inspired and strengthened by the witness

of the Korean martyrs, lay men and women will continue to build up the life and well-being of the nation through “their loving concern for the poor and the oppressed, their willingness to forgive their enemies and persecutors, their example of justice, truthfulness and solidarity in the workplace, and their presence in public life” (*Message on the occasion of the Congress of Asian Catholic Laity*, Seoul 2010).

Your Excellency, in offering my best wishes for the success of your mission, I would like to assure you that the various departments of the Roman Curia are ready to provide help and support in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon Your Excellency, your family and all the people of the Republic of Korea, I cordially invoke God’s abundant blessings.

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