



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE ACADEMY OF AMERICAN AND INTERNATIONAL LAW *Saturday, 27 September 1986*

Dear Friends,

1. I am happy to welcome to the Vatican the members of the Alumni Association of the Academy of American and International Law. I am pleased that you have requested this audience and I wish to take the occasion to assure you of my respect for your important role in society.

This meeting with you calls to mind the words of the prophet Micah: "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God"? Yours is indeed an esteemed and noble profession, one which boasts ancient and modern traditions and which exerts great influence on the stability and well-being of society. For the service you offer safeguards the rights of citizens, implements the demands of justice, and helps to guarantee society's orderly development in righteousness and freedom.

2. You are called upon to promote justice according to the norms of law. The exercise of your profession requires more than just legal knowledge and expertise. You must also be persons of wisdom and prudence, men and women possessing a vigilant moral commitment and firmly believing in the dignity and inalienable rights of every human being from the first moment of conception until natural death

As lawyers, you possess a deep concern for justice, yet something even more than justice is needed. As I stated in my Encyclical Letter on the mercy of God: "The experience of the past and of our own time demonstrates that justice alone is not enough, that it can even lead to the negation and destruction of itself, if that deeper power, which is love, is not allowed to shape human life in its various dimensions". Certainly one must not minimise the important role and absolute necessity of justice in relations between people; I only wish to point to the higher role and "deeper power" possessed by love. That is why the Prophet encourages us to act justly but also to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God.

3. I assure you of my prayers for your deserving efforts in the service of society. The Psalmist of

the Old Testament says: "The just will flourish like the palm tree and grow like a Lebanon cedar". As you seek to strengthen in our world the bonds of harmony, stability and peace, may the Lord grant his abundant blessings to you and your families.

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