



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr PATRICK POWER
NEW AMBASSADOR OF IRELAND TO THE HOLY SEE**

Monday, 22 January 1990

Mr Ambassador,

In welcoming you to the Vatican and accepting the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ireland, I am pleased to have this occasion to add further to the already solid edifice of close and friendly relations between your beloved country and the Holy See. Faith and history have combined to forge a special bond between the Irish people and the Successor of Peter, a bond which is entrusted to the responsibility of each succeeding generation and for which we should never tire of giving thanks to God who is the Good Shepherd of his Church and the Lord of the history of individuals as well as of nations.

I am grateful for the kind words you have expressed on behalf of President Hillery, to whom I ask you to convey the assurance of my goodwill and of my prayers for Ireland and her people.

The beginning of your diplomatic mission, Mr Ambassador, coincides with Ireland's term of Presidency within the European Community. This is also a time of extraordinary ferment and change in Europe itself. A new era seems to be dawning, marked by a great hope of freedom, of responsibility, of solidarity, of spirituality (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio ad eos qui plenario coetui Pont. Consilii de Cultura interfuerunt coram admissos*, 2, die 12 ian. 1990: vide *supra*, p. 59). People every where are looking with intense yearning towards a more peaceful and productive future. Old ways of thinking about development, defence, unity, and even the environment often seem inadequate to the new situations arising with increasing rapidity. But at the same time no one can overlook the fact that former uncertainties and threats have been replaced by other equally challenging and potentially destabilizing tendencies which those

responsible for the life of nations are called upon to meet with intelligence and foresight.

Political processes and economic development have a moral dimension which cannot be overlooked if they are to contribute to people's authentic and integral well-being. The peoples of Europe today demand that their governments provide laws and political policies that are eminently worthy of man and that effectively uphold the inalienable dignity of each individual and the exercise of fundamental rights, including freedom of conscience and religious practice. Both in the East and in the West, the peoples of Europe want an international order based on trust and solidarity, one that is no longer built on force or fear.

That the peoples of Europe have deeply-felt aspirations which they experience as their natural ethos and their inalienable right is clearly evidenced in their irrepressible search for justice, freedom and spiritual fulfilment. In this context, the idea of Europe's common destiny, strengthened by the current processes of democratization, is closely connected with the growing awareness of sharing the same spiritual roots (Cfr. *EIUSDEM Allocutio ad Patres Cardinales et Praelatos Familiae S. P. Romanaeque Curiae, imminente Nativitate D.N.I.C.*, 4, die 22 dec. 1989: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XII, 2 [1989] 1592). Based on those Christian roots, Europe has an *identity* and a *vocation* all its own: "that of joining together diverse cultural traditions in order to establish a humanism in which respect for the rights of others solidarity and creativeness may allow all to realize their most noble aspirations" (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio ad Patres Cardinales et Praelatos Familiae S. P. Romanaeque Curiae, imminente Nativitate D.N.I.C.*, 4, die 22 dec. 1989: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XII, 2 [1989] 1591). Perhaps as never before, there exists an opportunity to pursue those goals in a new context of openness and mutual sharing.

Since the history of the formation of European nations goes hand in hand with that of their Christian evangelization, to the extent that the frontiers of Europe coincide with those of the spreading of the Gospel (Cfr. *ibid*), then Ireland can recall and be rightly proud of the part she played in the historical development of this continent. At the very time when the stability of its peoples was being consolidated, Irish monks brought the light of faith and learning to a great part of Europe. That bright page of Irish history should be remembered so that the best energies of the present generation of Irish men and women may be directed in a similar way to the material, cultural and spiritual development of the "common house" (Cfr. *ibid*. 4: *l. c.*, p. 1592). Ireland now has the opportunity to renew and share with others to rich humanism which characterizes her people and which springs in the first place from her fidelity to her Christian traditions.

Mr Ambassador, you have mentioned two areas of conflict which seem to give the impression of being somehow less open to the positive political processes taking place elsewhere. One is Lebanon, which has been a frequent subject of my prayers and appeals, especially in recent months. The other is the tragedy of Northern Ireland, where violence continues to reap death, injury and destruction, as well as untold material and spiritual privation for the members of both

communities in that Province. The Holy See expresses ready support for those steps being taken by the Governments involved to bring about the conditions required for peace: especially the elimination of injustice and discrimination, which you have already mentioned. We can only hope that the people of Northern Ireland themselves will urge their representatives to engage in dialogue about the situation as it really is, a dialogue without partisan constitutional or political prejudice and without exclusion. There too, new ways of thinking are needed, more fully centred on achieving the integral well-being of all sectors of the population. I express to you the hope that the steps towards greater harmony and cooperation being taken in Europe will become ever more a reality in Northern Ireland as well.

Mr Ambassador, having represented your country in other important posts you now begin your mission as Ireland's diplomatic representative to the Holy See. You follow a long line of distinguished Irish Ambassadors. I assure you of my prayers for the success of your mission, for your family and for the people of Ireland whom you serve. May God bless your noble land!

*AAS 82 (1990), p. 888-890.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XIII, 1 pp. 152-155.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1990 pp. 60-62.

L'Osservatore Romano 23.1.1990 p.4.

L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n.6 p.4.

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