



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II  
TO H.E. Mr NIKOLAOS KALANTZIANOS  
NEW AMBASSADOR OF GREECE TO THE HOLY SEE\***

*Monday, 3 June 1996*

*Mr Ambassador,*

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Hellenic Republic to the Holy See. I am grateful for the cordial greetings you have brought from President Stephanopoulos and the Government, and I ask you kindly to convey my own good wishes and to assure them of my esteem for your nation.

As you have observed, recent history has seen vast and significant changes, both ideological and political, on the European continent. These changes carry great promise. Individuals have a real prospect of building ever more just and harmonious relations with one another and between all members of society. However, there also persists a certain tension: even as the "Old Continent" moves toward increased integration and mutual support, there still remains a danger of fragmentation and isolation. As I had occasion to note two years ago in my Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See: "On the one hand, Europe possesses a network of multi-state institutions which ought to help it to bring to fulfilment its noble community project. But on the other hand, this same Europe is, as it were, weakened by growing tendencies to individualism which are giving rise to reactions inspired by the most primitive forms of racism and nationalism" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Sermo ad Legatorum Ordinem apud Sanctam Sedem*, 6, die 15 ian. 1994: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XVII, 1 (1994) 120 s).

The terrible consequences of these tendencies are perhaps seen most clearly in the tragic conflict which has brought untold horror and destruction upon your neighbours in the Balkans. The Holy See encourages the international community to persevere in its efforts to bring about a just and

lasting peace. This is nothing less than an expression of that solidarity which should unite all nations as members of the one human family throughout the world.

Fostering solidarity and cooperation between peoples and nations is one of the principal motives behind the Holy See's presence and activity in the field of international diplomacy. A great new era is opening before the world community, an era which calls for a renewed sense of collective moral responsibility in the work of promoting integral human development, safeguarding human rights and freedoms, promoting more participatory forms of government, and establishing effective structures for the equitable resolution of disagreements between nations and ethnic and social groups. It is especially in light of this latter point that I express my hope that every obstacle to peace in the Mediterranean will be overcome through sincere and open dialogue.

Indeed, it is precisely dialogue and commitment to peace which must characterize the relations between peoples and nations. Moreover, in today's interdependent world, the construction of peaceful societies requires close cooperation between the richer nations and those still in the process of development. The scandal of poverty, violence and political oppression which still afflict vast sectors of humanity must be addressed, and it is encouraging to note that at the World Summit for Social Development held last year in Copenhagen these very issues were taken up with new resolve. The Summit acknowledged that in various parts of the world rapid processes of change and adjustment have caused an intensification of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. The challenge now facing the community of nations is to determine how best to deal with these situations, in such a way as to enhance the benefits which changes can bring for the whole human family and at the same time enabling the developing nations to be the principle agents of their own social and economic advancement.

In the official Declaration on Social Development, endorsed by the Summit, the various Heads of State and Government committed themselves to a "political, ethical and spiritual vision for social development" which would fully respect the "various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of people" (*Declaratio de progressu ad societatem pertinente Hafniae habita*, 26). Such a vision and such respect are indeed necessary if integral human development is to take place. In fact, only when the value, dignity and rights of the human person are upheld and promoted is the social fabric truly strengthened and the priorities of individuals and nations properly ordered.

The Church's mission includes the specific task of defending the whole range of human rights, especially the rights to life and to religious liberty: for these are the basis of human freedom and dignity, which are themselves a consequence of the fact that men and women have been made in the image and likeness of God. It is for this reason that the Church is an active partner in the quest for genuine progress and authentic development; and this is likewise the reason for her specific contribution in the fields of education, health care and social services. In this same context the Catholic Church remains committed to pursuing and promoting ecumenical dialogue with the

different Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities. If credible witness is going to be borne to the vital spiritual and cultural role which Christianity has to play in the Third Millennium, then mutual respect and love among Christians, as well as effective cooperation, must be strongly encouraged and nurtured.

Mr Ambassador, I am confident that during the term of your mission the friendship and understanding which have always marked relations between Greece and the Holy See will continue to grow, and I assure you of the full cooperation of the various offices of the Roman Curia. Upon yourself and all the people of your country I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

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*\*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XIX, 1 p.1443-1446.*

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