



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Dr DANIEL MICALLEF,
AMBASSADOR OF MALTA TO THE HOYL SEE***

Thursday, 24 April 1997

Mr Ambassador,

1. I welcome you with real pleasure for the presentation of your Letters of Credence at the solemn inauguration of your mission as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Malta to the Holy See. I beg you to convey my gratitude to your President, Mr Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, for his sentiments of courteous esteem which you have kindly conveyed. I likewise express my best wishes for peace and prosperity for the beloved Maltese people.

I cordially thank you, Mr Ambassador, for your noble words, and I offer you my best wishes for the fruitful fulfilment of your lofty mission in service to your compatriots.

2. That mission, Mr Ambassador, has been assigned to you at an important time in history, especially for the Holy See: that is, on the eve of the Year 2000 which is an epochal goal for the whole world and for believers in Christ, the 2000th anniversary of the Incarnation, which will be celebrated with a Great Jubilee. All peoples of Christian culture, including the ancient and noble people of Malta, are aware of the significance of this anniversary. It is certainly an eminently spiritual event, but there is no doubt that its cultural and social aspects are very important and I am sure that the citizens of Malta will pay great attention to both aspects of the event.

3. Mr Ambassador, you have wished to focus your speech on the commitment to peace.

As you so rightly recalled, in the Maltese tradition peace is an authentic vocation favoured also by the island's geographical position. To be nourished and bear fruit, this vocation must remain

anchored in its deep and solid Christian roots. Peace, in fact, is not merely one value among many, but is as it were the synthesis and full fruit of all the values which make up the integral development of the human person and his social relations. There is no commitment for peace without a commitment to truth, justice, active solidarity and freedom, as my venerable predecessor Pope John XXIII recalled in his memorable Encyclical *Pacem in terris* (cf. ch. III, AAS 55 [1963], 279-284).

This is why peoples who have received and accepted the Christian message down the ages are called, from generation to generation, to follow its enlightened inspiration, as the recent pastoral letter of the Maltese Bishops underlined. This need is more valid and necessary than ever for the people of our time if they mean to bequeath to the generations of the third millennium solid spiritual and ethical foundations on which to build what the Church calls the “civilization of love”.

This involves the demanding task of combining the values of modernity and progress, in the various fields of human knowledge and activity, with the perennial truths and values which have also motivated the Maltese people’s culture.

4. Among these values I want to emphasize those primary values of human life and the family, the proper understanding of which is threatened by relativistic concepts, often spread by the mass media.

As regards the value of life, you are well aware that the Church is mobilized on a world scale in a great challenge, on many fronts, both old and new. My intention in the Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae* was to remind believers, but also all people of goodwill, of the Christian message on life, and the need to promote a renewed culture of human life.

This commitment starts with the family itself, which, founded on marriage, forms the natural environment in which the person, in the various stages of his life, is accepted, educated, cared for, from conception until death.

In order to safeguard adequately these two primary values, it is important that the civil institutions, through the commitment of those who are called to work in them, should refer to ethical criteria which are truly respectful of man and his dignity.

5. For all these reasons, Mr Ambassador, collaboration between the Church and the State is highly desirable and I am sure that you will be able to contribute to the development of this co-operation in accordance with your country’s best traditions. I assure you that among my collaborators you will always find a welcome, attention and prompt understanding.

While I renew my wishes for a serene and fruitful mission together with my best wishes for your loved ones, I invoke upon you, the authorities and all the people of Malta an abundance of

heavenly Blessings.

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