



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Dr KARL BONUTTI
AMBASSADOR OF SLOVENIA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Monday, 7 September 1998

Mr Ambassador,

1. I welcome you with great pleasure at the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Slovenia to the Holy See.

Please express my cordial gratitude to Mr Milan Kuèan, the distinguished President of the Republic, for the courteous sentiments of respect and good wishes which you have conveyed to me on his behalf. I reciprocate with my best wishes for the fulfilment of his high mandate of service to your compatriots.

In thanking you for your noble expressions of gratitude for the independence process in the Republic of Slovenia, I would like to assure you that the Holy See will continue to offer its particular support to the beloved nation you represent, as it does to every nation striving peacefully to assert its own legitimate aspirations to freedom.

2. I still have vivid memories of the visit I had the joy of making to Slovenia in May 1996, which included Ljubljana, Postojna and Maribor. I am confident that those moments will endure in the people's historical memory as a constant incentive to nurture their own spiritual roots, drawing from them the necessary energy to grow united and well-motivated within the great family of nations.

Especially in historical periods marked by rapid changes and, so to speak, by sudden accelerations in the political, economic and cultural processes, it is more necessary than ever to preserve and strengthen the neverchanging values which characterize the human person and civil society. This is absolutely indispensable, especially from an educational point of view, for the new generations who have not personally experienced the toil of fighting for certain ideals and who risk losing their meaning and their requirements. Indeed, a society is vital to the extent that it can transmit the great

human values and a passion for their concrete realization in history.

3. Doubtless, the Ecclesial Community's presence, active and as widespread as possible, plays a very valuable role in achieving this goal. According to the eloquent Gospel image of leaven, it fosters the development of the whole social structure in the direction of justice, freedom, peace and respect for human rights. Slovenia knows all this very well, not as hearsay but because of her age-old historical experience: the annals of Slovenian history document the positive contribution made by the Catholic religion to the country's life and to the quality of its moral and cultural growth.

As Your Excellency knows, the Holy See is the central organ of the Catholic Church, which for centuries has also been firmly rooted in the Republic of Slovenia. It is the task of the Apostolic See, in union with the local Bishops, to promote relations with the State authorities and to regulate relations between the Church and the State. Unfortunately, under the past regime this was not possible. With the restoration of democracy, the Catholic Church has obtained new opportunities to carry out her work of evangelization and human advancement.

4. I have noted with satisfaction what you stated about finding solutions to some matters of great importance for mutual relations. I hope that with sincere and honest dialogue Church and State representatives will face other still unresolved matters, which have been the subject of discussion for years. A just solution to these problems will benefit not only the Catholic Church but the whole of Slovenian society, which the Church intends to serve and to whose well-being she wishes to contribute.

I hope that the fulfilment of the noble task entrusted to you, Mr Ambassador, will serve to promote and deepen our mutual relations, not only for the benefit of Slovenian Catholics, but for all the citizens of the beloved nation you represent.

I wish you a happy stay in Rome, Mr Ambassador. I can assure you that those who work with me will always offer you a warm welcome and attentive support. I cordially invoke an abundance of divine blessings on you, on the Slovenian people and on all those who govern them on this eve of the third millennium.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XXI, 2 p. 246-248.*

L'Osservatore Romano 7-8.9. 1998 p.9.

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