



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE FEDERAL
REPUBLIC OF GERMANY TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 13 September 2002

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am delighted to receive from your hands the Letters of Credence with which H.E. Dr Johannes Rau, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany accredits you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of his country to the Holy See. At the same time, I cordially welcome you to the Vatican and congratulate you on your new and honourable mission. I express the hope and confidence that during the time of your mandate the good relations between Germany and the Holy See will continue and become even better.

2. Since the historical reunification of Germany 12 years ago, the now popular phrase: "the reunification of what is destined to be united" not only in the Federal Republic but also throughout the rest of Europe has received a concrete meaning and, for many people of this continent, it has become very much a programmatic vision. From it they expect a just balance of interests, lasting peace and social well-being. From the beginning, the Holy See with its own means has promoted the process of European unification and has never doubted that the belief in a common spiritual and cultural identity of the peoples of Europe must be the basis for the political and institutional reunification of the European Union. Europe would not be what it is without the rich heritage of its peoples which, like the human genes, has forged and continues to shape the personality of the continent. To overlook or to abandon this "heritage" would be to risk its real identity or even to lose it. Before now, I have indicated that Europeans today must face the challenge of "building a culture and an ethic of unity, for in the absence of these any politics of unity is doomed sooner or later to failure" (Apostolic Letter *Spes aedificandi*, issued "Motu Proprio" proclaiming St Bridget of Sweden, St Catherine of Siena and St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Co-Patronesses of Europe, 1 October 1999, n. 10).

3. The Church founded by Jesus Christ is a feature that defines the identity of this continent: "There can be no doubt that, in Europe's complex history, Christianity has been a central and defining element, established on the firm foundation of the classical heritage and the multiple contributions of the various ethnic and cultural streams which have succeeded one another down the centuries. The Christian faith has shaped the culture of the continent and is so tightly bound up with its history that Europe's history could not be understood if we did not think of the facts of the first evangelization and then the long centuries when, despite the painful schism between East and West, Christianity came to be the religion of the European peoples" (cf. *ibid.*, n. 1). In this situation certainly, a clear reference to God and the Christian faith in the drafting of the European Constitution means that people recognize a historical and cultural reality that is active today and helps to give Europeans their identity. Mr Ambassador, the Holy See is confident that the intellectual and political leaders of your beloved country, to whom the culture of this great continent owes so much, will contribute a great deal to creating a fresh consciousness of these facts in German and European public opinion.

4. Mr Ambassador, the Holy See is pleased to learn that after the reunification of Germany and the enormous financial and social cost which this involved, the Federal Republic has not avoided the challenge posed by European integration. Despite the great tasks of construction in her new Federal *Länder*, Germany has stayed faithful to her European vocation and to her well-known commitment to solidarity with the poorest peoples of the world. Besides having to face their own problems, the Germans have not forgotten the problems of others. Thus German policy highlights a primary feature of the process of the integration of the continent: European unity, which becomes ever stronger, does not take the form of a movement to change boundaries, but involves a crucial openness to the world. In fact, the European states are called to cooperate actively in the creation of a global order of justice and peace! In this perspective the Holy See pays homage to the constant work of the Federal Republic of Germany in promoting respect for human rights in all the regions of the globe, so that wherever German aid for development arrives, human beings can live in dignity and freedom. Furthermore, because of her great social tradition, Germany has a special vocation to amplify and to consolidate the principle of the common good. May the substantial means that every year the German people donate to support the development of poorer countries, likewise contribute to protecting and enforcing respect for fundamental human rights, of which I want to enumerate the chief: "The right to life, an integral part of which is the right of the child to develop in the mother's womb from the moment of conception; the right to live in a united family and in a moral environment conducive to the growth of the child's personality; the right to develop one's intelligence and freedom in seeking and knowing the truth; the right to share in the work which makes wise use of the earth's material resources, and to derive from that work the means to support oneself and one's dependents; and the right freely to establish a family, to have and to rear children through the responsible exercise of one's sexuality. In a certain sense, the source and synthesis of these rights is religious freedom, understood as the right to live in the truth of one's faith and in conformity with one's transcendent dignity as a person" (*Centesimus annus*, n. 47).

5. Lastly, Mr Ambassador, through you, I desire to offer my respectful greetings to the President of the Federal Republic and convey to all the German people my heartfelt best wishes and blessing.

The good relationship of cooperation between Church and State in Germany is at the service of the good of the human person. It needs continually to be pursued and intensify on the basis of the principles of freedom and the determination of the tasks and responsibilities of both parties. Your Excellency, as I thank you for your cordial words, I assure you that my collaborators in the Secretariate of State and in the other offices of the Curia will be available to offer you any assistance which you might need in the exercise of your high office. To you, Mr Ambassador, to the members of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Holy See and to your beloved family, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

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