



The Holy See

*ADDRESS OF PAUL VI TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF BELGIUM TO THE HOLY SEE**

Thursday, 19 December 1968

Mr. Ambassador,

We wish you a cordial welcome to the Vatican where your mission will take its place in a beautiful and long tradition.

Many years, indeed, have passed since the day when Belgium entered into diplomatic relations with the Holy See. And these relations, which have always been cordial, have grown increasingly important in the course of the years, in proportion as the international political position of Belgium has advanced, and in particular, strengthened its role in the organization of Europe. .

The Holy See has followed closely and with keen interest the development of the international institutions which have their seat in your Capital, and it cannot but wish to see pursued and intensified with the help of your Country the laborious processes which must lead on at length to an organic unification of this great Continent.

Your Excellency has referred to « this pursuit of European ideals» which enter into the perspectives of the Holy See as into those of Belgium. Mention was also made of efforts toward the detente and the restoration of peace. It seems to Us that the first of these objectives constitutes a notable contribution to the realization of the second and that a united Europe would be a great step toward the peace of the world.

As for assistance to developing Countries, to which Your Excellency also referred, We think we have sufficiently manifested in words and deeds the extent to which We have at heart this cause which is so important for the peace of the world and, especially, so in harmony with the demands of the Christian faith.

On all these matters, you understand, the Church follow with the light proper to its spiritual mission the affairs of international activity in which your Country proves itself at once solicitous and capable of making a contribution to which one can only refer tribute.

But more significant than the role which Belgium fills in international life is its place in the Church. This explains and justifies the value which the Holy See attaches to having good relations with your Country. Marked by a long and glorious tradition, Belgium has always had in the mind of the Church the character of a Catholic nation, and it has done honor to this title in the abundance of its educational, social, and cultural institutions which need no praise. Our dearest wish is that Catholic Belgium will be faithful to its tradition; it is our hope also that she will know how to find in this tradition the strength to surmount her present difficulties.

It is not surprising that in her as in other nations today there are at work ferments of renewal which attest to vitality, but which can also at times be a source of disturbance in the civil and religious order. Our desire is that she will discern with clarity and Christian wisdom what will be for her true welfare and that with harmony among all her sons she may follow her élan toward progress in all areas.

Your Excellency will have the kindness to be the interpreter of these wishes to their Majesties the King and Queen of the Belgians toward whom at the moment Our thought is full of cordial and respectful esteem. Willingly We invoke on their Persons, on the Government and the Belgian people, and on Your Excellency, and on the happy fulfillment of the mission which is inaugurated today, the abundance of Divine blessings.

*ORa 1969 n.1 p.3.