



The Holy See

*ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO MR. STEN ERIK MALMBORG LILHOLT
THE AMBASSADOR OF DENMARK
ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE**

Thursday 1 December 2005

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Denmark to the Holy See. I thank you for your gracious words and for the greetings you bring from Queen Margrethe II. Please convey to Her Majesty my respectful good wishes and assurance of prayers for the well-being of your nation.

Since 1982 the Holy See and Denmark have enjoyed the benefits of formally established diplomatic relations. This has resulted in an encouraging level of contact and cooperation in the service of peace and justice, especially in the developing world. In this regard, I am pleased to note that your country continues to be most generous in its dedication to reduce world poverty and foster international development. The Holy See appreciates the importance attached by the Danish Government to achieving the *Millennium Development Goals*, particularly with regard to the contribution by richer countries of 0.7% of their gross national product to the international aid budget. I offer you every encouragement to continue resolutely along this path towards a more just distribution of global resources and I pray that many other nations will be inspired by the leadership your country has shown in this regard.

Besides the material poverty experienced by our brothers and sisters in the developing world, there are other forms of deprivation that give cause for concern in modern society. In Denmark, as in many European countries, there is currently much discussion of the issues associated with immigration. I urge the Danish people to offer a welcome to the newcomers in their midst and I

trust also that those who have found a home in Denmark will respect the values and sensibilities of their host nation. The integration of peoples requires each group to achieve a just balance between asserting its own identity and accommodating that of others (cf. *Message for the 2005 World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, 2) and I know that your Government appreciates the importance of reconciling these different elements. I pray that the various groups represented in Danish society will continue to live together peacefully, giving an example to other nations of the mutual enrichment that host countries and immigrants can offer one another.

This cooperation is especially important in the fields of ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue. Even though the Catholic community in Denmark represents only a small percentage of the population, I can assure you that it is eager to play its part in contributing to these significant endeavours. It is my fervent hope that ecumenical dialogue with the established Lutheran Church will start to make significant progress and I trust that you will do all in your power to encourage this. Moreover, in view of the phenomenon of immigration, inter-religious dialogue is also taking on increasing significance. The Catholic Church is keen to contribute her considerable experience and expertise in this area so as to promote mutual respect and understanding between the followers of different religious traditions in your country.

As in much of Europe today, Danish society is becoming increasingly secular in outlook. The Church has a right and a duty to point out the dangers that ensue when man's divine origin and destiny are ignored or denied. The tradition of Christian faith in your country, stretching back over a thousand years, has made it what it is today. Indeed, the principles that have shaped Western civilization flow from the underlying vision of the world that the Christian faith proclaims. It is essential to remember that their binding nature is predicated not on mere consensus but on divine revelation.

For this reason it is necessary to examine carefully any new social developments that emerge, even if they enjoy widespread support or appear to promise significant rewards. The defence of life from conception to natural death, for example, and the stability of marriage and family life are goods that must be safeguarded in every society, however vocal the forces that may seek to undermine them. They form part of the objective moral order, and can never be discarded without gravely endangering the common good. Likewise, scientific and technological advances should always be evaluated according to sound ethical criteria, and nothing that threatens the inherent dignity of the human person should ever be tolerated. Only by faithful adherence to these unchanging truths can society create the conditions in which human beings may flourish and prosper.

Your Excellency, I am confident that the diplomatic mission which you begin today will further strengthen the already fruitful relations existing between the Holy See and your country. I assure you that the various departments of the Roman Curia are always ready to offer help and support in the fulfilment of your duties. With my sincere good wishes, I invoke upon you, your family, and all

the people of Denmark, God's abundant blessings.

* *L'Osservatore Romano* 2.12.2005 p.7.

Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI, vol. I p.895-897.

L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n. 51 p. 4.

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