



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE NEW AMBASSADORS AT THE PRESENTATION
OF THE LETTERS ACCREDITING THEM TO THE HOLY SEE***

Clementine Hall

Thursday, 16 December 2010

Your Excellencies,

It is a pleasure to receive you this morning in the Apostolic Palace for the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of your respective countries to the Holy See: Nepal, Zambia, the Principality of Andorra, and the Republics of Seychelles and of Mali.

You have just addressed to me the courteous words of your respective Heads of State for which I thank you. Kindly convey to them in reciprocation my respectful greetings and good wishes for them and for the lofty mission they are carrying out at the service of their country and their people. Through you, I likewise wish to greet all the civil and religious authorities of your nations, as well as all your compatriots. Naturally, I also extend my prayers and my thoughts to the Catholic communities present in your countries. While living the Gospel, they seek to witness a spirit of fraternal collaboration.

Your Excellencies, I would like to talk to you about human brotherhood. A poignant appeal for this has been made throughout the year to relieve Haiti, damaged first by an earthquake and then by cholera. Other tragedies have unfortunately struck other countries in the course of this year. Your countries, the international community and the world of charitable associations have responded to these particularly urgent appeals for aid, which it is naturally right to follow up and to intensify. For her part, and through her different institutions, the Church is making a multiform contribution which she will continue over time.

The beautiful principle of fraternity, found in the national motto of many countries, has encountered

less resonance in the development of philosophical and political thought than the other ideals such as freedom, equality, progress or unity. This principle has remained largely a dead letter in modern and contemporary political societies, mainly because of the influence of individualistic and collectivistic ideologies (cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 390).

Fraternity, as you know, has a particular importance for Christians because of God's plan of brotherly love, hence of brotherhood revealed by Christ. Moreover, in my last Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, I broadly addressed this theme which is indispensable for harmonious human coexistence.

To live with dignity all human beings need respect; they also need to be treated justly and for their rights to be recognized in practice. Yet in order to lead a fully human life this does not suffice: in fact, the person also needs brotherhood. This is true not only in his or her close relationships, but also on a global scale. Now, if the globalization process which is under way brings human beings closer to each other, it does not necessarily make them brothers and sisters. This is a greater problem since, as my Predecessor *Pope Paul VI* pointed out, the underlying cause of underdevelopment is the weakening of brotherly ties (cf. *Populorum Progressio*, n. 66).

Human reason is able to recognize the equality of all people and the need to limit excessive inequalities between them but proves incapable of establishing fraternity. This is a supernatural gift. For her part, the Church sees the realization of human brotherhood on earth as a vocation contained in God's plan of creation for which she desires to work ever more faithfully, at the universal and at the local levels, as she does in the countries which you represent to the Holy See.

If, in carrying out the specifically spiritual mission that Christ has entrusted to her, the Church inspires special closeness among his disciples, she likewise wishes to make her own sincere and powerful contribution to the formation of a more fraternal community among all human beings. For this reason she refrains from acting as a lobby, concerned solely with her own interests, but works under the gaze of the One who is Creator of all human beings, wishing to honour the dignity of each and every one.

The Church therefore strives to place love and peace at the foundation of the multiple human links that connect people, just as God desired in his creative wisdom.

A practical expression of brotherhood in daily life is giving freely and with respect. These need to be expressed in all the areas of human activity, including business. The profound identity of the human being, his being-in-relation, is also expressed in his economic activity which is one of the sectors of major cooperation between people. Through my latest Encyclical, I wanted to highlight that economic activity is where giving is also possible and even necessary (cf. *Caritas in Veritate*, nn. 34-39).

Every form of giving is ultimately a sign of God's presence because it leads to the fundamental discovery that in the beginning everything was given. Such an awareness does not make human breakthroughs any the less beautiful, but frees them from the primary form of slavery, the desire to create oneself by oneself. On the contrary, in gratitude for what has been given to each, human being, man can open to the action of grace and can understand that the person is not called to develop in violation against or alongside others but rather with and in communion with them.

Nonetheless if brotherhood lived among peoples can find a positive echo at the level of "authentic fraternity", one should not forget that it does not constitute a means but is an end in itself (cf. *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 20).

The Church believes in Christ who reveals to us that God is love (cf. I Jn 4:8). She is also convinced that for all who believe in divine charity, God brings the certitude that "the way of love is open to all men and that the effort to establish a universal brotherhood will not be in vain" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 38).

As diplomats, you are undoubtedly especially concerned with the different aspects of political and social life that I have just described. During your mission to the Apostolic See, you will have the possibility, Your Excellencies, to discover more directly the actions and preoccupation of the Church on all the continents. You will find with my collaborators a courteous attention.

Upon you, upon your families, upon the members of your diplomatic Missions and upon all the nations you represent, I invoke an abundance of divine Blessings.

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