



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO AUSTRIA (September 10-13 1983)

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS***

Sunday, 11 September 1983

1. After having met with the highest ranking representatives of the government of Austria this evening, I am also most pleased to have the opportunity of addressing you, the diplomats accredited to this country. I should like to thank you for coming and for the honour your attendance shows not only to myself personally, but to the Head of the Catholic Church as well. Together with the Head of the Apostolic Nunciature, which has also become my residence for a few days, I would like to welcome all of you most cordially.

A separate meeting with the members of the diplomatic corps has been an integral part of almost all of my pastoral journeys. By this I should like to express the high esteem in which the Holy See holds your contributions towards greater understanding and harmonious cooperation between the peoples of the world. The City of Vienna offers a unique invitation to accomplish this task. Indeed, it is here that the status and task of diplomatic missions were determined and formulated for the first time in binding international agreements. As you know, this took place in the Vienna Agreement of 1815 and in the Convention on Diplomatic Relations of April 1961

2. Diplomatic missions are an important instrument of modern diplomacy. Their activities are not limited to safeguarding bilateral interests between individual states, but rather extend to the fundamental concerns and demands of the international community of nations: to the preservation or restoration of peace, the promotion of fruitful cooperation between governments, as well as the creation of more human and more reasonable legal ties between nations through common, loyal agreements.

Diplomacy has often been called the "art of peace", and rightly so. We are well aware of the

tremendous significance and responsibility involved in your mission as diplomats in the world today. The clamour for peace, which is growing ever louder in the hearts of men and in the streets and squares in many parts of the world, seems to support the fears of those who refer to the present situation in the world as a transition from the " postwar " to a new " pre war" stage. Thus today - perhaps more urgently than in the past - we need the courageous and steadfast efforts of a skilled diplomacy which attempts with patience and perseverance to confront the voice of violence with the voice of reason, to alleviate existing tensions and always to keep the door open for dialogue, so that man's call for peace will not one day be suddenly smothered in the noise of weapons.

What is called for above all is an honest and sincere diplomacy, which renounces deceitful cunning, falsehood, and intrigue, which respects the legitimate claims and demands of the partners and paves the way for a peaceful solution to bilateral and international conflicts by means of a genuine willingness to negotiate. Insincerity spreads distrust, especially where trust is absolutely essential and where it alone can provide a truly solid basis for lasting understanding. All those who call for peace encourage you, who as diplomats are called to be architects of peace, not to lose hope in the face of great difficulties, but rather to use prudence and perseverance in deepening your commitment to the just cause of peace. Although in the final analysis the decisive resolutions are made in the field of politics, you as diplomats can use your special position and knowledge of the situation to influence the decisions of your governments in a positive way.

3. Ladies and gentlemen,

As I stressed in my address to the United Nations, "The justification of all politics lies in its service to man, in the untiring and responsible caring for the problems and fundamental areas of his existence on earth in its social dimensions and scope, on which the well-being of every individual also depends" (Address of 2 October 1979). It is in this service to man that the difficult and responsible task of the politician and the diplomat meets the Church's special mission of salvation which is directed towards the good of man as a whole and all of man kind. The Church shares in the concerns of the decision makers in state and society, especially in matters of preserving and promoting the sublime values, such as peace, justice, human dignity, human rights, reconciliation and trusting cooperation between nations. Not because of political ambitions, but rather for man's good and the sake of its own mission, the Church feels an obligation to offer its moral support and every possible concrete assistance, also by using the ways and means of a trustworthy diplomacy, which is itself an outstanding instrument of peace.

You are all aware that the Holy See itself maintains full diplomatic relations with a large number of states, many of whom are represented here among you. The Vienna Agreement mentioned before officially conferred upon the papal representative a certain privileged position among the diplomats, which had already been granted earlier by international custom. This is not so much a distinction for the representative of the Holy See, but rather far more a tribute to the spiritual and

moral values which the Church represents in the international community and whose priority was thereby fundamentally acknowledged by the signatory states.

4. In accordance with the mission of the Church, the diplomacy of the Holy See is essentially religious and spiritual in nature. This enables it to make its own specific contribution in the international power plays among nations in achieving their respective goals . If modern diplomacy and politics are to fulfil the expectations placed in them, the fundamental spiritual and moral values must be incorporated into the objectives of the various nations and be taken into consideration in trying to achieve them. History and experience have shown how futile international peace efforts or commitments to justice and social progress are when only the symptoms of the existing evil are fought and not their causes, i.e., their underlying moral defects and abuses.

The Second Vatican Council dealt with this question in its Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: "For government officials, who must simultaneously guarantee the good of their own people and promote the universal good, depend on public opinion and feeling to the greatest possible extent. It does them no good to work at building peace so long as feelings of hostility, contempt, and distrust, as well as racial hatred and unbending ideologies, continue to divide men and place them in opposing camps. Hence arises a surpassing need for renewed education and for new inspiration in the area of public opinion" (Gaudium et Spes, no. 82). In order to overcome abuses and threatening dangers in private and public life on a national or international level, it is absolutely necessary to change man himself, and renew and strengthen him morally. For this basic task alone the State and the Church must rely on each other as partners. It is evident that the Church and Christians can make an important contribution to achieving this goal.

Rest assured, ladies and gentlemen, that in your difficult and responsible efforts as diplomats for the cause of peace, justice, international cooperation and the universal progress of all nations you may rely on the constant support in solidarity of the Church and the Holy See. May the sublime values you strive for through the high "art of peace" in the international community be bestowed upon you personally, your families and the people whom you represent here. This I wish and ask for you all with all my heart.

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