



The Holy See

***DISCOURS DU PAPE JEAN-PAUL II
À S.E. M. KAARLO JUHANA YRJÖ-KOSKINEN,
NOUVEL AMBASSADEUR DE FINLANDE PRÈS LE SAINT- SIÈGE
À L'OCCASION DE LA PRÉSENTATION DES LETTRES DE CRÉANCE****

Jeudi 9 février 1984

Mr. Ambassador,

1. I offer you a most cordial welcome to this house where many Finnish diplomats have already come to represent their country as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Holy See. The feelings which you have just expressed, as you in your turn begin your important functions, touch me and make me happy, and they allow us to think that your mission will be profitable to Finland, to the Holy See, and to the strengthening of peace in the world. And I cannot help but think of His Excellency President Mauno Kolvisto who has sent you and whom I thank for his kind wishes, of the Government and of all the dear people of Finland.

2. You have stressed the improvement of international relations, and this is precisely an area, as you stated, which greatly concerns the Holy See as well as Finland. No one can forget the long history of your country: it has known moments of glory, trial, humiliation, courageous recovery, and it has sought to preserve its originality, its culture, its independence. The troubles in my own country help me to realize what is at stake! The geographical and strategic location of Finland induce it even today, and more than ever, to seek a delicate balance by remaining watchful and clinging firmly to stability and peace. One can understand the value that you attach to security, to neutrality, to removing the threat of war, of all wars, and especially to limiting and reducing nuclear arms which, as a recent study by members of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences has shown, are a peril for all life on this planet. That is why you advocate the recourse to negotiation, honest dialogue, understanding, tolerance, so as not to let tensions grow bitter and crises aggravate themselves and degenerate into armed conflict or violent acts which leave one of the parties

unjustly wronged in its rights and a prey to hostile revolt. But, at the same time, you are aware that it is not a question of ignoring realistic conditions for peace or the elements which make for the honour and happiness of sovereign nation: its cultural personality, its social ideas, its moral and religious convictions, its liberty, and the fundamental rights of all of its members.

3. The Holy See understands these points and tries to promote them in its very special mission to the world community and more particularly in Europe. It sometimes offers a specific contribution in difficult situations, to avoid war, encourage a return to negotiations and lead to just solutions. More generally, however, its moral and spiritual authority is directed not so much to the technical aspect of discussions as to the spirit which should pervade them and allow them to produce results. What the Holy See is seeking to establish, in fact, is an atmosphere of confidence over and beyond intransigent positions and even breakdowns. a calm and honest searching, a vision which looks at the real problems without allowing the mind to be blinded or hampered by prejudice and ideologies, a concern for justice for all, even for small countries and minorities, respect for freedoms and rights. In a word, it is a question of dealing with what is essential, what is needed for the peaceful future of peoples, who are all too often forgotten, and for their true progress. This is why I speak so often of the deterioration in East-West relations and of the tremendous needs of the «South». This is why the Holy See is so greatly interested in the progress of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, whose «Final Act» carries the name of Helsinki. We would wish that the principles contained in this document be developed even more and concretely, as they so rightly deserve, especially in what concerns human rights and cooperation between nations.

Mr. Ambassador, we have spoken mostly about international relations, which o happen to be of vital importance to the security and peace of Finland. But the Holy Sec does not forget what concerns your country more directly: its happiness, its economic prosperity in such a harsh climate, the preservation and development of its cultural and artistic heritage, the importance given by its people to moral and spiritual values; for the merits of a nation lie primarily in its soul and in the deep meaning which it gives to life, in relation to God the Creator and Saviour. I am sure that the small Catholic community has much to offer in this respect, along with the Lutherans and the Orthodox believers, and all the citizens.

I offer my warmest wishes to the entire nation and, in the first place, to Dr Mauno Koivisto who now guides the destiny of your country and who delivered to you these Letters of Credence to represent him at the Holy See and thus strengthen our bonds of friendship and cooperation. And I offer you my special wishes also so that, thanks to the welcome which you will find here, the message which you will hear and the witness which you yourself will give, your mission may be happy and rewarding. May the Lord bless you and all those who are dear to you!

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