



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO SWITZERLAND (June 11-17, 1984)

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

Wednesday, 13 June 1984

1. During my pastoral visits to different countries, I always take time for a brief encounter with the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the government. I would like to emphasize my interest in such a meeting, and I know that you attach importance to it also. It holds a special place among so many meetings, most of which are meant for Christians and have a religious or pastoral purpose. In your persons, it allows me to greet the civil authorities and the peoples of many lands, some of which are now familiar to me through my journeys, and most of which have representatives at the Holy See. More especially, I would like to put before you the problems of the world community, problems which are within your mission and competence.

Your task is such an important and delicate one that it has always enjoyed, from ancient times right up to the present, great respect and even a guarantee of inviolability for the person invested with such a responsibility and for his freedom of action. This principle remains fundamental, even though there are sometimes regrettable facts to the contrary.

2. In any case, what I want to underline is the value of the work done by diplomats for the benefit of their fellow citizens as well as for world peace. Diplomats are people who, because of their cultural formation, their specific training, their ability, their understanding of men, situations and events, their wisdom, and their loyalty to their own country, have been chosen for a lengthy assignment or, in some cases, to deal with certain special problems. All those who are part, at whatever level it may be, of this sector of the political activity of the state, have the honour and the duty to be aware of their specific obligations with regard to the authorities of their country, but also of the international political community among whom they work. I have in mind the ambassadors and their associates. But I cannot forget the representatives and observers to the many and

famous international organizations which have established their headquarters in this country.

There is no doubt that developments in society over the years have brought about changes in some of the external aspects of traditional diplomacy as well as in some of its powers and functions. The unusual speed of communications and of news reporting, and the ease of making contacts at the highest levels, make it possible for governments to deal directly with each other over many important matters which at one time were almost entirely the responsibility of your predecessors. But this does not diminish in any way the need for diplomats, those indispensable collaborators. On the contrary, inasmuch as new problems, interests and needs arise, and as interdependence grows because mutual cooperation between countries is becoming more frequent and more complex, the presence abroad of experienced men who really know the international scene, who are truly upright and have a great sense of responsibility, is absolutely necessary. You are still the ones who transmit the instructions and express the will of your governments, loyal servants of the interests of your peoples, workers for peace. Your task is probably not always understood, but it is necessary. delicate and rewarding

Your action, in fact, is not autonomous nor left to your strictly personal inspiration. The diplomat reveals, at the international level, the way affairs of state are conducted in his country. One could say that he reflects the basic principles or pragmatism of his government's policy for relations of all kinds with other countries. This is especially true for the Head of Mission who is the personal representative of the Head of State and the official spokesmen for his government.

Your work brings you face to face with the vital problems of society so that you may contribute to their solution. Just as I do when speaking with Heads of State, I now want to recall these important human goals which are of such concern to the Church

3. You have to protect and further the interests of your countries. You have to create a suitable atmosphere for commercial financial and cultural exchanges between your various countries. You have to arouse and intensify friendly attitudes, or try to remove bad feelings which prevent normal contacts and friendships. Your role involves both bilateral and international politics. It is within your power to mediate in the many thorny problems which disturb the entire world at the present time. You know them well. Each one of them is a danger to a delicate and fragile peace: already existing regional conflicts; the arms race; the proliferation of nuclear arms; famine, drought and miseries of all kinds in many parts of the globe; contempt for justice and human rights; ideological tensions, etc. Following its standards - courtesy, discretion, negotiation - faced with the seriousness of contemporary distress, diplomacy is at hand to study the means of achieving a satisfactory solution, the most equitable and the most effective, so as to avoid further suffering and give people a glimmer of hope.

4. The country where you now exercise your diplomatic mission seems to be free of the serious problems which I have just mentioned. But, at the same time, this allows you to step back and

grasp their importance in other countries. Switzerland has struggled to maintain peace, the respectful coexistence between peoples very different in their traditions and languages, to further democracy and freedom at home. In view of this, disastrous civil wars, conflicts between neighbouring states, totalitarian systems, the stifling of basic freedoms - and, among these, religious freedom - should be repugnant to all of you. International terrorism, which strikes at the innocent and weakens countries seeking peace, must find no encouragement or involvement by any government, even more so among diplomats whose very mission is opposed to violent "solutions". The constant increase of political refugees, very numerous here, points to another fundamental problem: not only hospitality and help given to them in your own countries, but also the serious reasons which drive so many men and women to choose exile in order to protect their freedom of thought and belief. The great number of foreign workers also provokes thoughts on the working conditions and the family life of these workers. Finally, the generally comfortable life of most of the citizens in this country, as far as health and material goods are concerned, must not make you forget those people who, in so many parts of the world, are deprived of even the minimum. You are less likely to forget this because Switzerland hosts many international organizations, all seeking to overcome these problems.

5. You know very well that the Church, whose mission is to spread the Gospel, is committed at the same time to promoting total human dignity, without any other interest, either political or economic. She recalls continually the basic principles concerning the human person, social harmony, the rights of peoples, in favour of justice, peace and true brotherhood among all men.

In her name and for this purpose, the Holy See offers its cooperation to all those responsible for the common good. To them and to you, distinguished Heads of Mission here present, I express my esteem and my good wishes for the work and the efforts made in view of creating a better world based on truth, justice, love and freedom, which are the only solid foundations of peace in human society. This was the wish formulated by John XXIII in the Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. and he had been a diplomat himself.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your visit and I pray God to bless you, your families and your contribution to the good of humanity.

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