



The Holy See

***DISCOURS DU PAPE JEAN-PAUL II
AU NOUVEL AMBASSADEUR DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE SOCIALISTE
FÉDÉRATIVE DE YOUGOSLAVIE PRÈS LE SAINT-SIÈGE***

Jeudi 19 décembre 1985

Mr. Ambassador,

Accept my heartfelt thanks for the address you have just delivered in the name of the President of the Presidency of the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia, who has chosen you to represent your State at the Holy See. Moreover, I am grateful to Your Excellency for having spoken of the intentions which animate you and will always be a source of inspiration for you in your new diplomatic assignment.

In taking the place of your predecessor, His Excellency Mr Zvonimir Stenek, you are now entering the large family of accredited Ambassadors to the Holy See. All diplomatic relations with the Holy See make a contribution to the vitality of this diplomatic family, whose goal is to foster, deepen, and solidify the communications of esteem and understanding, friendship and collaboration between governments and the Holy See.

Like my predecessors, Pope Paul VI in particular, I often have the occasion of emphasizing the importance of bilateral dialogue between the Church and States. In taking part in such a dialogue, and in taking care to respect the domains which are not at all within the extent of its jurisdiction, the Church is only attempting to give a visible expression, among other more specific forms, to its universal mission. Since the Church is spread all over the world, it is aware of possessing a message which transcends all generations and civilizations. That is why we are convinced that we must make a contribution to the happiness of humanity in offering to nations and their governments the Church's treasury of values concerning man, his integral development, and his life in society. The Church cannot be estranged from the problems in which men are embroiled. If, in different places and for various reasons, the Church meets with obstacles to the role which is

proper to it, whether these are short lived or of long duration, she has the courage to live humbly rooted in the global reality of the country where she exists. Among other means, the Holy See, in its diplomacy, feels united to people of each nation by special juridical bonds whose effects happily go beyond the formal aspect of written documents of understanding. This is also the reason why accredited diplomatic representatives to the Holy See never have the feeling that they are isolated or that they are strangers in the house of the Universal Shepherd of the Church - even if they are not Catholics. When the Pope himself visits the many countries that invite him and welcome him to their land, he feels, so to speak, right at home among them. I cannot even measure my gratitude to nations and their leaders that let me meet so many Christian communities in their countries.

My contacts with the Ambassadors whom I receive in the Vatican or whom I see in their own countries when I make apostolic journeys, like my conversations with their government leaders, are, first of all, times of attentive listening. It seems important to me to listen to what they have to say, to know their preoccupations and their desires. These contacts are, in conscience, a duty for me as well as an occasion for suggesting to the diplomatic representatives and eventually to those in charge of political and social life, a sincere, disinterested cooperation in the serious questions affecting the life of humanity, such as local peace or international concord, justice and the rights of persons, the means of overcoming endemic calamities, and on a larger scale, the demands of the common good.

Certainly, you know, Mr. Ambassador, the diplomacy of the Holy See, like all ventures on this level, does not always achieve the results one hoped to acquire. Diplomatic work demands much tenacity modesty, understanding and patience. The Church, very clear on the difficulties, wishes to be a messenger of hope. She knows that tomorrow and after tomorrow, she will have to begin a dialogue again with such and such a government and find new solutions according to the possibilities of the time. Efficiency is not the criterion for the value of the message that the Church has and gives to the world. The Church has chosen and must continue unceasingly to choose the sure path of fidelity to God and to men. In our time, faced as we are with challenges, risks, ideological and economic antagonism that we all know, the Holy See, with its different institutions, and by the practice of its diplomacy wants to be in a position to work towards more just and peaceful international relations and thus contribute to the humanization of the human family and of history.

For fifteen years your beloved country and the Apostolic See of Rome have renewed diplomatic relations. I would like your mission to make a happy contribution to their development, in all possible areas, especially that of religious liberty, so important for the Christians in the territory of the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. Believers who see that all their rights are respected and who are treated with equality and kindness, are much better disposed to be loyal and courageous citizens of the State and of their fatherland.

During the course of this year, my thoughts were especially with your country, to honour the two renowned brothers of Thessalonica, Cyril and Methodius, and to celebrate the eleventh centenary of the death of the latter. In an encyclical dated 2 June 1985, I drew the attention of the entire Church to the remarkable work that was theirs, the evangelization of the Slavic peoples of all Moravia. Starting in your own homeland, they helped in the rapid progress of the language and culture of the Slavs and invented their alphabet so that they could teach the faith using their gifts and the traditions of the region where they taught. The Cardinal Secretary of State was able to preside at the jubilee ceremonies on 5 July at Djakovo, as Pontifical Legate, among a representation of Yugoslavian authorities. I feel that these two great figures must live on as the honour of your country, the Slavic nations and Greece. They are for men of our time a remarkable example of a fruitful alliance between culture on the one hand, and faith and the missionary spirit on the other hand – an alliance accomplished in a spirit of peace with respect for persons.

At the end of this talk, I would ask Your Excellency to transmit to the President of the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia my respectful greetings and my wishes for economic, social, and moral progress of the country. All the Yugoslavian people remain in my thoughts and prayers.

To you, Mr. Ambassador, I express my best wishes for a fruitful unfolding of your lofty mission, in giving you the assurance of the welcome and support which you have the right to expect from me and from my devoted collaborators. I confide you to God's care, as well as your family, your new responsibilities and your country.

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