



The Holy See

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

Saturday, 12 January 1985

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The noble words just spoken by H.E.Mr Joseph Amichia, interpreting the sentiments and the best wishes of the entire Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, would receive, I am sure, the approval of all the participants. Who would not share those aspirations to peace in the face of current conflicts, threats, starvation, racial discrimination, national debts, unemployment? I am particularly grateful to your Dean for the generous and confident regard with which he reviewed the action of the Holy See, and brought out several aspects of my spiritual mission. May God grant that these best wishes, so beautifully expressed, be more effectively realized in 1985, despite our human limitations, for the community of nations and for the Church.

In a few moments, I will have the joy of greeting each of you individually. A number of you are participating for the first time in a meeting of this kind, having but recently presented their Letters of Credence and, in some cases, as first Ambassadors of their countries to the Holy See. Several others have had to wait since it was some time last year that their Governments established diplomatic relations with the Holy See. In the name of all, I wish all the newcomers a hearty welcome in this gathering of distinguished diplomats, which would like to be a family as well. The great variety of your faces, of languages, of the countries and cultures you represent can all these not symbolise, in a climate of respect, mutual esteem and peace, the harmony of nations in search for mutual understanding and brotherhood.

1. My cordial best wishes go to each of you, Heads of Mission and collaborators, to your families, to the peoples and the institutions, that is to say the Governments, you serve, and even more to the nations whose physiognomy and energy remain beyond the vicissitudes of history and the lot of statesmen.

I could likewise send greetings through you to the various continents. A part of Europe is always very much present at the Holy See. But Africa is no less so, as is attested by the intervention of your Dean, the Ambassador of the Ivory Coast. Through you, the Holy See makes its own the hopes and the concerns of the various African countries. The Holy See is aware of their youth and vitality, the aspirations and the drives in the areas of development, the needs to a articulate authority, liberty and peace, the efforts to promote the unity of the continent, to ensure human dignity and notably to overcome intolerable racial discriminations. It expresses the fervent desire that they may chart their course, still rather new, in a way that is satisfying and just for all.

Latin America, where there is such a concentration of people of great Catholic majority, likewise assumes considerable importance in our eyes. I have underlined this by going to Santo Domingo in preparation for the fifth centenary of Latin America's evangelization. In the near future I will be visiting four of these countries. Their preoccupations - the struggle against all forms of poverty, the better distribution of wealth, the concern to ensure the formation and the employment of the very numerous youth, to guarantee human rights, to ensure internal and external peace - all these are so many questions that hold the interest of the whole community of nations, and the Holy See expresses to the countries its warm encouragement and support.

Asia is likewise well represented among us, from the Near East to the Far East, and, beyond the permanent Missions, we cannot forget the other nations, in particular the great Chinese nation, whose aspirations and dynamism the Church always follows with respect and interest. My visits to Korea and Thailand demonstrated the Church's solicitude for the Asiatic peoples and their remarkable cultures, represented moreover in the Catholic Church: the personal experience I had remains engraved in my heart's memory.

It is not necessary for me to dwell at any length here on North America. As far as the United States is concerned, everyone is aware of the possibilities of this great country, its world influence, its people's attachment to liberty. And I have a grateful memory of what I observed on the spot, still recently, in Canada.

Finally, I would like the many islands of Oceania to feel, in spite of their great geographical distance, the concern of the Holy See, which was demonstrated, among other ways, by the papal visit to Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, and by a message to Tahiti.

This moment of best wishes to the Pope has a certain simplicity about it, for it discards all pointless artificiality. But it is also a solemn moment, for in it we are invited, you and I, to cast a lucid glance, as far and as deep as possible, on the year that is beginning, on the whole world scene, disclosing the threats and the signs of hope, before God who probes minds and hearts and who, on Christmas night, calls all men and women of good will to peace.

2. Lucidity may lead us to see first the things that are still far from perfect as the media relentlessly

points out every day. Christmas Day, when our glance was focused on the poor crib of the Infant God at Bethlehem, I myself mentioned several types of suffering, of evils, of "poverties" in every sense of the word (like those of the refugees I met in Thailand), of violences, of dangers, so as to make all victims conscious of our solidarity and of the Church's preferential option for the poor, but also so that hope might be born in their hearts in light of him who came to enrich us with his divinity and to scatter the darkness of error, egoism and hatred.

For this very reason, we also, and perhaps first, must consider the undeniable positive accomplishments, so as better to estimate what is possible, to strengthen the hope and the desire to undertake such gestures of peace.

By way of significant example, you will understand my citing the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Argentina and Chile, which ended the dispute over the southern zone. This was an affair which, six years ago, could have degenerated into a fratricidal war and consumed the energies of these dynamic peoples in destructive enterprises. But the two parties were determined to continue along the course of dialogue, which had reached an impasse, and they requested the mediation of the Holy See. The work was laborious, for the question involved was extremely complex. An iron will was required on both sides. Each of the countries emerged with honour and without detriment to its national interests, with simply a few reasonable concessions on both sides. This procedure at the same time opens up promising prospects for the different sectors of fruitful collaboration about which we are going to speak. The example shows that the way of negotiation, prudent and patient, directly between parties or with the help of an intermediary, can lead to the solution of apparently insoluble controversies. The Holy See continues to give thanks for this event to Providence, who granted it this opportunity to offer its services, to be his humble instrument, and who disposed the persons and the circumstances in a favourable direction.

One could even mention as positive signs the advances attained in the direction of democracy in several countries which had known a kind of totalitarianism. Not that the new situation simplifies the problems of economy or of social equilibrium; but it constitutes, in our view, while ensuring a sufficiently strong public authority which is necessary and the unity of the nation, a way more normal, more sure, more respectful of liberties, in a word more just; it puts an end to unjust oppressions and opens the field to the responsible participation of all (cf. Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, n. 17, par. 6, 7).

I would like also to cite as another positive sign the recent opening of discussions in Geneva between the United States of America and the Soviet Union on the limitation of nuclear arms. It was indeed very necessary that the dialogue, too long frozen, be resumed on a question as vital as this. After this first meeting, it seems that one can feel a prudent optimism. God grant that the actual negotiations, which will without doubt be laborious, will confirm the favourable forecasts! The eyes of the whole world are fixed on the relations between these two great powers, because

of their potential economic and military supremacy, and thus of their enormous responsibilities, in the area of nuclear power which affects the lot of humanity, but also in many other political and moral domains.

This situation of bipolarization cannot, however, condition the free expression, the latitude for action and the possibilities of initiative of the other countries; rather, this responsibility of two powers - like that of the permanent members of the Security Council within the United Nations - finds its justification only to the extent that it allows the other nations to assume their place, to undertake their initiatives, to exercise their influence and their expansion within just conditions and for the good of the world community.

3. So that international relationships might favour and strengthen a just peace, there must be at the same time reciprocity, solidarity, and the effective collaboration which is the fruit of the other two. These three key words will serve this year as the leitmotiv for our discourse.

These orientations could moreover be compared with the great project of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which was concluded at Helsinki in 1975. It opened a hope in what concerns, among other things, the development of mutual relations, in consideration of the realities of the technical, cultural, social and humanitarian orders proper to each, the respect for human rights and fundamental liberties. This year will mark, in the month of August, the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Final Act. The difficulties of cooperation are many and one must often await its fruits from one session to the next. A long way still lies ahead, a way of patience, much good will and sincerity. But who will deny that a direction has now been charted to help all the countries concerned, those of Europe and those beyond the Atlantic, to realize a real advance in exchanges, to the benefit of the quality of life of their respective peoples? The Holy See, which is a member of the Conference, continues to hope for this.

Regarding reciprocity in relations, it is not opposed to sovereignty, but rather is a condition for its worthy exercise. Each of the countries here represented is indeed sovereign in the eyes of the community of peoples, equal in dignity, proud of its independence and in search of its own legitimate interests. You yourselves, Ladies and Gentlemen, members of the Diplomatic Corps, are appointed to serve the good of your respective countries. Last year, on this occasion, I spoke to you regarding the benefits, conditions and exigencies of such a sovereignty.

But when a country claims its rights, the right to be treated - at times to be assisted - with justice and in honour, with account taken of its interests, it then can hardly ignore the similar rights of others. True political dialogue - which constituted the object of my Message for the 1983 Day of Peace and of the allocution to the diplomats that same year - requires openness, receptivity and reciprocity: it accepts the difference and the distinctiveness of the other, for an honest conciliation. It is at the same time a search for what is and remains common to humanity, even within tensions, oppositions and conflicts, because it has to do with what is true, good and just for every man,

every group and every society. There is no dialogue of peace without this acceptance of the justice that is above parties, that judges all, and that implies, in practice, reciprocity. How can one claim at the international level or in bilateral relations what one has refused to concede to others in conformity with their rights? It is a question of integrity, of justice; the only things that can be an obstacle here are, on the one hand, fear of the unjust violence of the others, and on the other hand, fear of the truth, the blind egoism of a people or of a fraction of a people, the will for power on the part of its leaders, and even more their ideological inflexibility.

Christians receive in the Gospel a word of Christ himself which brings at the same time light, strength and urgency to the course of reciprocity: "Treat others the way you would have them treat you" (Mt 7:12). These words express the commandment: "Love your neighbour as yourself".

This would have many applications in international life. How can one invoke respect for the fundamental rights of man, about which more has never been spoken, if one does not respect them at home?

How can one speak of the right to independence, as the ABC's of the principles governing international relations, if one is intervening from outside to arouse and support subversive forces in another country, whether indirectly or even directly, by force, and this against the wish of the majority of the population? And one could say as much when a country has practically imposed a regime and its ruling apparatus on another.

How, within a country, can one invoke the rights of a part of the population while excluding the rights of the others to live peacefully on the same land?

Or how can one impose on a whole country a particular law that suppresses the civil and religious rights of a minority?

A glance at the activity of international organizations likewise arouses some perplexity. These organizations have their value to the extent that they are receiving the cooperation of all the members and are pursuing the common good of all, while seeking to communicate to them the fruits that come from concerted action. It is to be desired that they benefit from the most universal participation possible.

As for the domain of religious liberty, it must also include a reciprocity, that is to say an equality of treatment. Certainly, those who believe in the true God, through respect for the truth of which they adhere with their whole faith, cannot admit the equivalence of all religious faiths, and still less can they fall into religious indifference; they even desire, quite naturally, that all come to the truth that they know, and they engage themselves to this end by a witness that respects the liberty of compliance, for at issue here is the dignity of man in opening himself to religious faith by a free homage of mind and of heart, with grace, according to what his well formed conscience discovers

and prescribes. They can then at the same time - and indeed they must - respect the dignity of other persons, who cannot be prevented from acting according to their conscience, above all in religious matters. The Second Vatican Council made this distinction well in the Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* (n. 2), thus resolving a problem that may have left something to be desired in the past history of Christian communities. Also - you will allow me to express this to you here in all confidence - one can understand the astonishment and the feeling of frustration of Christians who welcome, for example in Europe, believers of other religions, giving them the possibility of exercising their worship, and who see themselves forbidden all exercise of Christian worship in the countries where these believers are in the majority and have made their faith the State religion.

Moreover, serious difficulties arise in cases where the State adopts an atheistic ideology. There is, to be sure, a great variety of situations according to which the State does or does not find itself confronted with strong confessional communities of staunch faith. But, in general, there exists a contradiction between the official declarations on religious liberty, supposedly allowed to private individuals, and anti religious propaganda, to which are added, here and there, measures of coercion preventing the free exercise of religion, the free choice of ministers of worship, free access to seminaries, the possibility of catechizing the youth, not to mention discrimination against the civil rights of believers, as if the assent of faith were a threat to the common good!

Moreover, there exists at least one situation in Europe where atheistic ideology is so bound up with the State that atheism is imposed on consciences and every religious act, of whatever confession, is absolutely forbidden and severely punished.

In these different situations, what is at stake is the spirit of tolerance properly understood, which is not religious indifference but respect for consciences, that is to say respect for one of the most basic liberties, and respect for the distinction between the political and the religious domains such as Christ so well expressed it: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, but give to God what is God's" (Mt 22:21).

4. Beyond the reciprocity of rights and strict justice in equality of treatment, we must arrive at a common solidarity in the face of the great stakes of humanity. All peoples are in a situation of mutual interdependence, on the economical, political, cultural levels. Each country needs or will need the others. God has entrusted the earth to mankind as a whole, making solidarity a law that holds for the good as well as for the evil. To be sure, there have been various degrees of good fortune in such matters as the natural richness of lands or of sub soils, favourable climates, talents connected with this or that civilization, and there also has been the effort expended by individuals, according to their more or less developed spirit of enterprise. Economic and social progress can be delayed by the difficulties experienced above all by the young nations in mastering the new processes of production and marketing, and sometimes also by negligence, or corruption, by individuals, to whom remedial measures should be courageously applied. But, in any case, these situations of inequality invite the rational beings that men are, to join in overcoming these

handicaps, and, confronted with hardships of the kind that touches entire segments of humanity, there are no valid pretexts for refusing to contribute to their survival and their development. United assistance is the only fully human response, and is even in the interest, rightly understood, of everyone in the long run. It is one and the same adventure that we are all involved in. At Edmonton, in Canada, I pleaded once again for the countries of the South, and I am happy to see Heads of State sensitizing the opinion of their people to this capital emergency.

The urgent need to progress in this spirit of solidarity is so evident that I will content myself with citing but two examples

Many developing countries have contracted enormous debts, which are getting worse. I know that the problem is complex and that it ultimately involves the question of the prudence of the loans and of their actual utilization for investments in the countries. But the situation has become inextricable for many of the countries in debt: without a new system of solidarity, how will they ever be able to repay? How will they ever escape the impasse? The interest of all is at stake here, including the rich countries who risk finding themselves isolated. The human sense of solidarity is at stake here. For Christians, such a renewal of relations could hardly be achieved without the generous and disinterested love of which Christ himself is the model and the source.

The other example is that which, every day, the news brings out before our astonished eyes, at least if we do not turn away our eyes and our heart, as your Dean so well put it: the starvation of the drought countries, notably in Africa. We know only too well that the countries concerned cannot at the present time - and by themselves - emerge from this tragic situation, prevent millions of people from dying, or stop for tomorrow the expansion of the desert. But the situation can be rectified: not only must we continue to supply the emergency aid, levied, among other things, on surplus crops which some are tempted to destroy for the sake of balancing a too circumscribed economy, but we must place at everyone's disposal the techniques that God has allowed us to discover. I was speaking, at the beginning, about positive signs. I am anxious to underline this one: the fact that, in recent times, organizations of the international community, countries and private institutions have been willing to respond to the challenge is very encouraging.

5. According to the principles of reciprocity and of solidarity which we have brought out, it would be possible to implement a more effective collaboration of the members of the world community in other precise domains where violence is wreaking havoc and where grave menaces are weighing upon humanity.

It is a question of contributing to the discouragement of solutions of violence and helping to overcome fear, that climate of distrust which paralyses certain countries, causes them to turn in on themselves, but may also involve them in lying, inflexibility, provocation, violence. Of course, here too justice or self-defence are invoked, but another climate, a new philosophical perspective, as I put it on 1 January of this year, would allow them to find other solutions to achieve justice and

security. I limit myself to mentioning four domains here. And in these there could be cooperation from not only the parties directly involved in this dispute or in that conflict, but also from a growing number of countries and especially the international organizations.

a) Without doing anything that could be described as meddling in the internal affairs of others, would it not be possible for them to use their influence to discourage the conflicts in progress, to assist the parties involved to resume the paths of dialogue, to search for negotiated solutions capable of being accepted by all, except perhaps by those whom a blind ideology or a Machiavellian interest maintains in their designs? One could at least expect of other countries that they abstain from supporting the parties in conflict in the pursuit of operations that are causing so many deaths and so much destruction.

Here, one cannot fail to think of Lebanon. When will it finally be able to find the desired peace and the capacity to strengthen its own institutions in loyal collaboration between the various components of the nation? How can we prudently put an end to the external interventions and, when these are terminated, how can we guarantee peace, prevent the reprisals and the massacres that all the world still vividly recalls?

One could reason in a similar way for the wars and the acts of merciless violence that are taking place between Iran and Iraq - this conflict being fed by a continuous flow of arms furnished by the most diverse parties - and moreover in Afghanistan, in Cambodia, in several countries of Central America. If the Holy See speaks of them, even when its own faithful are not involved, it is because it cannot be resigned to seeing the destruction and massacre of innocent people who have already payed so highly for the absurdity of war.

The Church is well aware that de escalation is difficult, but we must have the courage to begin. For her part, for example in this Central America, she is prepared to offer herself as a place or a forum that would allow the parties to meet each other, to understand each other, to begin a sincere dialogue of peace.

b) We likewise need to discourage violence and fear at the level of disarmament; to lower as much as possible the level of armaments, to encourage a new philosophy of international relations, to renounce selfish and ideological interests which nourish tensions, hatred, subversive activities, and to devote the energies and the resources liberated through disarmament to the great causes of our time: the struggle against hunger; development; human advancement (cf. my statement after the Angelus on 1 January 1985).

c) It is also important to fight together against international terrorism, by not in any way encouraging the terrorists, and, on another plane, the drug traffic which has become a veritable plague. In these areas it seems, moreover, that, apart from the tragedy once again recently created by some air pirates, there has been progress here, which results above all from a greater

international solidarity.

d) But we must also discourage violence under all its aspects, including that perpetrated against political prisoners, secretly and without restraint, as though it were a matter left to the arbitrary discretion of the powers, even under the pretext of security, in concentration camps, in prisons, in other places of confinement. There are cases where they are set upon in an ignoble way by those who are willing to go so far as the complete destruction of their personality. This is the disgrace of our humanity. There must be at least a denunciation of these deeds, a very clear condemnation on the part of international opinion, and visiting rights for humanitarian agencies legitimately recognized for this purpose.

This holds true for all violated human rights, as for religious liberty.

6. By way of conclusion, I would like to offer you three more reflections: on the contribution of youth, on the education to moral values, on the spiritual depth of reconciliation.

Yes, it is good, it is necessary, to count on youth. Most countries represented in the Diplomatic Corps have an enormous proportion of young people. In the interest of peace, it is important that these be able to make valid ethical choices. The United Nations has invited us to enter into the International Youth Year, and I devoted to this subject the Message of the Day of Peace: "Peace and Youth Go Forward Together". It is not that the young people have the experience that you have: without doubt they do not see all the difficulties of political, national and international life. They have their weaknesses as well, their temptations, their moments of violence, and sometimes they shirk concrete responsibilities. It is not a question of using demagoguery with them. But do we know how to take their legitimate aspirations into account, which often go, in a generous spirit, right to the essential? In any case, it is they who tomorrow will be the artisans of peace. How are they being prepared for this role? Are our ways of treating questions of justice and peace really able to satisfy them? How can we provide them with an example, a hope, an insertion into professional life which will lead them out of the trauma of unemployment, which will bring them to active participation? Above all, how are we to educate them to true values and to respect for others?

7. Without this education to moral values, in the people and with their leaders or future leaders, every construction of peace remains fragile; it is even doomed to failure, whatever be the cleverness of diplomats or the forces displayed. It is the duty of politicians, educators, families, those in charge of the media to contribute to this formation. And the Church is always ready to make her contribution.

I do not need here to specify these moral values. One thinks of integrity, fidelity to commitments, honesty, justice, tolerance, respect for others - their life, their life conditions, their race - sharing solidarity. Christians like to link all these social virtues to charity, to love, and to found them on

every human person's transcendent dignity, of which God is the guarantor, and on the example of Christ.

But how far does one go in respect for man? Should one not begin with the human embryo? Today, genetic manipulations, daring experiments, are multiplying, and they pass rapidly from one country to another. These problems are becoming in some sense international. Who will dare say that this is merely a question of technical prowess? Who does not see the serious human problems that are at issue, and which will have to find solutions on the level of right, on the level of ethics? Respect for moral values at this level forms part of the respect for man which is at the basis of peace, which obviously begins with respect for human life. Every country, especially if it has powerful means of influence at its disposal, should weigh its responsibility as to the ethical value of the technical achievements, of the methods or of the more or less moral or sectarian ideas it exports or allows to be exported.

8. Finally, the Church is well aware that it is difficult to cure man of the temptation to war, to egoism, to hatred. She has sometimes been called utopian. She is not so naive, as to think that one will succeed on earth in exorcising all violence. In the post-synodal Exhortation published last December, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, I spoke of "a world shattered to its very foundations". And for us, the root of these shatterings is a wound in man's inmost self, an original sin. The drama of humanity many philosophers assert this themselves is a spiritual drama, a drama above all of atheistic humanism (cf. Exhortation cited, n. 2). But while knowing that on this earth one cannot achieve the definitive reconciliation of people with God, with others, with themselves, with creation, the Church intends to work fervently at this, as a sign, sketch and witness of the world to come. She always believes that the liberation of man's sinful heart, through forgiveness and through love, is possible, that the progress of dialogue, of reconciliation, of brotherhood is possible, above all if people are reconciled with God. Her specific role is to labour at this level, in her catechesis and in her sacraments. But she is also engaged in the work of social reconciliation, above all through the activity of the Holy See and its various organisms. Its intention is to place its institutional structure and its moral authority at the service of harmony and peace (cf. *ibid.*, n. 25).

It is to this, I hope, that you will continue to be witnesses here. My purpose has been not so much to point out to you the achievements of the Holy See which are well below our desires and our ideal as to encourage you, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, to contribute to creating a climate of reciprocity, of solidarity and of international collaboration about which we have spoken. This is the honour of your noble profession, especially when you exercise it before a spiritual authority. We will have contributed together to prepare a world more human, more worthy of man and of God. We entrust this project to the inspiration and to the grace of God. I invoke his Blessing upon each one of you. This was the essential part of the cordial best wishes that I am happy to extend to you.

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