



The Holy See

VISITA PASTORALE NEL LIECHTENSTEIN

***INCONTRO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
CON I PARLAMENTARI E I RAPPRESENTANTI DEL GOVERNO****

*Vaduz (Liechtenstein)
Domenica, 8 settembre 1985*

1. I have followed with great interest the address which you, Sir, Head of Government, have just spoken on behalf of the State Organs and Authorities of the Principality of Liechtenstein, in the presence of His Serene Highness the Prince of Liechtenstein and his deputy, the Crown Prince, and their wives as well as the Bishop of this Diocese and other representatives of the Church. I would like to express my thanks to you and everybody concerned for the kind words of greetings spoken.

The way in which you have spoken has revealed the particularly close relationship between the State and the Church in the Principality of Liechtenstein. This is rooted in the Christian history of this country which honours the apostle St Lucius, one of the first apostles in the province of Raetia, as its Patron Saint. Christianity which already began in Roman times in this province at the foothills of the Raticon and at the upper course of the Rhine has been continued without interruption throughout subsequent time. Christianity has also produced rich fruit here and left significant traces in Christian art as well as in religious customs. Church life has become established and to this very day has formed society. In recent times the presence of the Princely Family in this country has its special significance for this. The House of Liechtenstein has always been devoutly Catholic and remains a loyal member of the Catholic Church. The Family has always had a close and good relationship with the Holy See. When one takes all this into consideration it is understandable that the legislators in the Principality of Liechtenstein ensure the special State protection for the Roman Catholic Church, since it is the National Church; although everyone still has complete freedom of belief and conscience and the right to practise other religions within ethical bounds and public order. At this point I would like to give a special brotherly welcome-of appreciation and solidarity to all the non-Catholic citizens of this country.

2. As the Successor of Peter to whom God's providence has entrusted the duties of Chief Pastor of all the Churches, I have come today on a pastoral visit to your esteemed country, for which you as members of the State Parliament, as members of the Government and as civil authorities have to bear a great responsibility. Your duty, so full of responsibility, results from the constitutional definition of your State's political system, whereby the Principality of Liechtenstein is a constitutional hereditary monarchy built on a democratic and parliamentary basis. In this way, the power of the State rests in the Prince and the people (Article 2 of the Constitution). However, basically, your mission has an even deeper foundation. Nevertheless, it is written in the Letter to the Romans: "There is no authority except from God" (Rom 13:1). This assertion by the Apostle of the Gentiles has unfortunately been shattered by many negative influences throughout history and today is fundamentally questioned by many.

Exactly 100 years ago, in 1885, my revered predecessor, Pope Leo XIII, in his Encyclical *Immortale Dei*, expressed some fundamental thoughts concerning the Christian System of Government and the theological origin of civil authority. In it he exhorted statesmen to take heed, above all, of God and his will, as the supreme ruler of the world. I know that the problems for which politicians have to find and apply solutions today are extremely complex. I also see, however, that those responsible for the State and society, in their search for solutions to problems, are referred unfailingly to historical, ethical and religious assumptions. Precisely the Christian politician must retain a keen sensitivity for the basic conditions which accompany day-to-day politics. His actions must be based upon a consciousness of solid values and responsibility. In his discussions and decisions he must never depart from what his conscience tells him, a conscience which is moulded and continues to be moulded by Christian faith. Particularly in the context of today's manifold opinions and intentions the believing Christian, occupying a leading position in society, must be expected to take an unequivocal stand.

3. As the visible head of Christ's Church, whose characteristics are unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity, I am particularly obliged to raise my voice in a plea that wherever this Church lives in its members, these qualities may shine among them. This happened among us this morning in a unique way during the Eucharist we celebrated together. The entire life of the faithful and the organization of their community should be grasped and moulded by this.

In my opening remarks, I referred to the Christian tradition of this country and I desire from the depth of my heart that the people of Liechtenstein today will continue to build upon this precious and powerful heritage. This is essential for the preservation of the identity of this small community. The negative ideological influences to which the people of this country also are exposed must never undermine the morally healthy substance which guarantees a future full of hope and worthy of man.

4. By means of co-operation on the international level, relating above all to the question of Europe's security and future and the community of the European countries as whole, valuable

contact have recently been made between the Principality of Liechtenstein and the Holy See. It was a fortunate circumstance that these contacts have been solemnly confirmed by the recent establishment of diplomatic relations. Our common aim is to contribute to the best of our ability to justice and peace in the world. These efforts on the part of the Church comply with a vital desire which the Second Vatican Council – concluded twenty years ago – expressed in a separate chapter of the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* under the title "The fostering of peace and establishment of a Community of Nations". In this sense, "citizens should develop a generous and loyal devotion to their country without any narrowing of mind. In other words they must always look simultaneously to the welfare of the whole human family which is tied together by the manifold bonds linking races, peoples and nations " (G.S. 75).

The natural basis of the family of the human race, even though it is large, composed of individual families of nations, is always the individual family. Thus its moral condition is closely linked with the religious-moral quality of the individual quality of the individual family, permit me to report and emphasize here, in regard to the moral integrity of the individual family and of the entire community how decisive it is today to take a determined stance for the defence of basic moral values of society, particularly for the protection of unborn human life. The Second Vatican Council speaks very clearly in this regard: "God, the Lord of life, has conferred on men the surpassing ministry of safeguarding life--a ministry which must be fulfilled in a manner which is worthy of man. Therefore from the moment of its conception, life must be guarded with the greatest care, while abortion and infanticide are unspeakable crimes» (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 51).

5. The clear voice with which the Church speaks for the weak, defenceless child may not go unheard; it is the voice of the child itself which God has "knit together in the mother's womb ", as the psalmist said (cf. Psalm 139:13). Nobody may injure this womb in an immoral way. He who does so, injures the family itself, the actual family as well as the national family and the family of mankind. May the Principality of Liechtenstein therefore also undertake everything on the moral foundation of its Christian heritage in order effectively to protect and defend the value and the dignity of human life in all its phases. The "Charter of the Rights of the Family" which the Holy See submitted to all persons, institutions and authorities in October 1983, and which deals with the family's mission in today's world, is a helpful guide "in favour of the family, which must be preserved and defended against every illegal attack" (cf *ibid* Introduction).

Page 7

The unborn human being's right to life is one of the inalienable human rights; protection and defence of this right have been admirably applied, particularly in your country over the years and above all in the recent past by your manifold readiness to make sacrifices and take courageous initiatives. I remember the generous support given to the refugees and wounded during the last World War by the Liechtenstein Red Cross, the ready acceptance of fugitives, to whom you granted hospitality within the borders of your country and made possible for them a new secure existence. The Principality of Liechtenstein will always be held in honour for this. May this

courageous action for the dignity and the rights of mankind in the past serve as an example to your people, and in particular to the leaders of this State at present and in the future, and may it also guide them and be a commitment for them in their future decisions!

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you sincerely for your esteemed presence and attention. May Almighty God go with you and bless you in your responsible work on behalf of the State and society. May Mary, Queen of Peace, give you and yours as well as those people entrusted to your temporal care in this dear Homeland her maternal protection and support.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n. 38 pp. 6, 7.*

© Copyright 1985 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana