



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF JAPAN
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Saturday 29 April, 1988

Mr Ambassador,

I welcome you today and gladly accept the Letters of Credence by which you have been appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan. With gratitude for the kind words of greeting which you have expressed on behalf of His Majesty the Emperor and His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince, I would ask you to convey to them my best wishes and the assurance of my esteem. I fully share their desire to see the relations existing between Japan and the Holy See develop and expand still further on the basis of your shared commitment to peace, harmony, progress and justice among all the nations of the earth.

In the contemporary world there is a profound and almost universal yearning for peace. The awareness of peace as a universal value has grown, even in the face of the tragic history of the present century, so deeply and terribly marked by conflict and by the ever more frightening capacity of man to inflict death on a scale never before imagined. As the only country to have experienced directly the awful effects of atomic bombing, Japan is a unique witness of the truth that there can be only one path for the human family to follow: the path of peace.

It is necessary for individuals and nations to be ever more convinced that they must wholly commit themselves to easing tensions, to fostering disarmament and to strengthening the structures of peace. It is necessary today to think more in terms of building peace in the world than simply avoiding conflict. The subjective foundation of peace is a new spirit of coexistence and a new outlook of respect for the human person in a willingness to collaborate for the sake of the progress of all^[1]. This reflects other conditions for peace, especially a true solidarity among all people,

irrespective of race, religion or political doctrine, as members of the one human family meant to live on this earth in a constant search for authentic personal and collective well-being and development.

In the process of building peace Japan has a major part to play. Out of the ruins of the Second World War, your country has rise to remarkable heights of economic achievement. Today Japan is one of the principal agents of economic and technological progress. Herein lies a great opportunity and challenge to promote human and spiritual values so as to contribute effectively to the advent of a true peace, founded upon a sense of the dignity of every human being, upon the recognition of basic human rights, of the respect and love due to every person for the simple reason that he or she belongs to the human family. It has always been my prayer and hope that the nations of the world, educated by past painful experiences, will make positive efforts to inculcate into their citizens, especially the young, an unshakeable sense of universal brotherhood and the moral and ethical vision needed to uphold justice, an essential condition for peace.

At the heart of the Holy See's relationship with the various nations of the world one does not find interests of a merely economic or political nature, but rather the promotion of a profound and respectful dialogue concerning the meaning and destiny of human life and activity. It is important, in fact, that the leaders of societies do not forget that they are at the service of their fellow-citizens in all their moral and spiritual aspirations.

That is why, as Your Excellency knows, the small Catholic community of Japan is concerned to promote the moral education of the members of society as well as to witness to the spiritual dimension of life. In an industrialized society such as yours, it is vital that the dignity of the individual be effectively safeguarded and respected, and that cordial social relations be ever more solidly established, with special care given to the less talented and productive classes of the population. In this regard, the Catholic community is service of society at large.

Urged on by the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, which constitutes the great point of reference for Catholics today, the Church in Japan is making efforts to be ever more truly Japanese. While the presence of missionary personnel has been and continues to be essential to the Church's activities, I am happy to note that Japanese Catholics themselves have long since been taking the lead in all areas of their religious and pastoral endeavours. I am confident that this process will go forward with success in the climate of religious tolerance and freedom which characterizes Japanese society today.

Mr Ambassador, I pray that you will be happy in the exercise of your lofty responsibilities, and I invoke Almighty God's blessings upon your engaged in many religious, educational and social activities not only for the benefit of its own members but at the country.

[1] Cfr. Pauli VI *Nuntius ob diem ad pacem fovendam dicatum pro a.D. 1968, die 8 dec. 1967*:

Insegnamenti di Paolo VI, V (1967) 621.

*AAS 80 (1988), p. 1464-1466.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XI, 1 p. 1056-1058.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1988 pp. 304-305.

L'Osservatore Romano 30.4.1988 p.5.

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