



The Holy See

**DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
A S.E. IL SIGNOR GEORG HOBENBERG,
NUOVO AMBASCIATORE D'AUSTRIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE***

Sabato, 17 dicembre 1988

1. With special joy I welcome you here today to the Vatican as you begin your mission as the new Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Austria to the Holy See. I greet you warmly as I did your illustrious predecessor, and I extend to you best wishes in your new illustrious assignment. With it you undertake the responsibility of a precious heritage, which has grown throughout the centuries in a spirit of friendship and solidary partnership between your country and the Holy See, and is attested to in the common concern for the great desires of the international community in many areas at the present moment.

2. As you have emphasized in your greetings for which I thank you most kindly, our meeting today is still under the influence of my second pastoral visit in Austria, which took place this year. Its happy outcome was made possible by the harmonious co-operation of the ecclesial and civil authorities, for which I would now like once again to express my grateful recognition. May the very positive experience of those days of friendly relations between State and Church in your country and the common action for the good of all individuals and peoples be even further deepened.

In its almost two thousand years history, Christianity has decisively influenced the cultural development and destiny of Austria.

Even if today she is perhaps asked less, the Church's task precisely in our time and society is all the more pressing, the more the requirements of a life worthy of a human being are called into question through a continuing neglect of the basic moral values. Order and the common good in States are grounded in the virtue of the citizens who are thereby encouraged to subordinate special interests to the common good, and to support only the objective right and good. Christian faith teaches people that the source of true freedom consists only in relation to the truth in

obedience to God. In the ethical domain this basic attitude is expressed in the acceptance of principles and types of behaviour which are dictated by conscience and have their ultimate authority and binding force from God. As I emphasized frequently during my pastoral visit, the «Yes to Life» that the Christian pronounces in his or her faith embraces the collective reality of the life of the individual and society on the basis of those inalienable rights and duties grounded in the order of creation, and which alone have the capacity of making public order worthy of human beings. In the task of their protection and promotion, your Nation also always finds a trustworthy partner in the Church.

3. As you rightly emphasized in your discourse, the common effort of country and the Holy See especially extends to the field of securing international peace, to the common struggle for justice and social equality among peoples, including those in Europe, which should find a new solidary unity in its Christian roots.

On various occasions of my pastoral visit I referred to the special responsibility and multiple possibilities of Austria as an important intermediary among peoples because of its geographic location at the heart of Europe. The Holy See, because of its specific mission in the community of nations, and above all in Europe, supports all serious initiatives for justice and peace, as well as all of the endeavours which are in harmony with the values and principles which the Church has been commissioned to preach by Jesus Christ. The Holy See is especially concerned, therefore, to promote an atmosphere of trust which, despite the present, not insignificant difficulties, brings about constructive dialogue and objectively just solutions among peoples. The Church's competence is not in technical matters, but in the spiritual and moral values which alone can offer an adequate basis for a lasting national and international peace. It is of the greatest significance that the human person must be at the centre of every plan; therefore the structures that are meant to improve or re-create, have to guarantee the greatest possible space for the freedom and dignity of the individuals and peoples concerned. The Holy See fittingly pays special attention, naturally, to the European continent, the home of peoples for whom the Christian faith is and remains an element of their cultural identity. The more Europe learns to cultivate the fundamental human and Christian values of its culture and to speak in greater measure with a single voice, the more will it also be able to fulfil its great task and challenge for the development of the countries of the Third World.

4. The Church offers nations – and your country of Austria as well -her loyal cooperation in the realization of these important goals of the well-being of individuals and peoples. May it be granted to you in your new office, Mr Ambassador, to develop further and deepen the confident collaboration between Austria and the Holy See fruitfully for the great desires of the international community.

With a special word of thanks I reciprocate the good wishes which you have conveyed to me from your Federal President, Mr. Kurt Waldheim. At the same time, I cordially impart to you and your

distinguished family, as well as to all your collaborators in the embassy, my special Apostolic blessing.

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