



The Holy See

*DISCOURS DU SAINT-PÈRE JEAN-PAUL II
À S. E. MONSIEUR TOM TSCHERNING,
NOUVEL AMBASSADEUR DE SUÈDE**

Jeudi, 18 mars 1993

Mr. Ambassador,

I am very glad to greet Your Excellency today, on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters by which His Majesty King Carl Gustav of Sweden accredits you to the Holy See as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Sweden.

Your presence before the Successor of Peter and the very fact that you will be living in the Eternal City show the importance your country's authorities and all the Swedish people attach to the close diplomatic link with the Apostolic See and the respect they have for its international activities, especially in regions of the world where peace and justice are not yet fully respected and more especially on our very doorstep, where fratricidal fighting is continuing to be a thorn in the flesh of Europeans.

You know, Mr. Ambassador, that in international life the Catholic Church's only intention is to defend the human person, his personal life, his spiritual freedom, and the good understanding between peoples, so that each individual and each human community may find their place, prosper and enjoy the riches and beauties of creation.

The words with which you have just addressed me and for which I sincerely thank you, witness to your nation's paramount interest in peace and disarmament, in the peaceful solution of conflicts, in tolerance, in solidarity with people living in the same area, and with the nations of the East, which recent history has brought closer and with which you hope to build harmonious relations and collaborate in various ways. These concerns coincide closely with those of the Holy See. Your

country's goals and the efforts it is already exerting within the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, have led it to adhere fully to the institutions that Europe is creating in order to affirm its unity and to base it on human and spiritual values.

At the time your mission is beginning, I am glad to recall the ecumenical event that we celebrated in St Peter's Basilica on 5 October 1991, on the occasion of the sixth centenary of the canonization of St Birgitta. This feast gave me the memorable opportunity to pray at the tomb of the Apostle Peter in fraternal communion with the Catholic and Lutheran Bishops of your country, including dear Archbishop Bertil Werkstrom, Primate of the Lutheran Church of Sweden. I hope that Rome may become a second homeland for you, Mr. Ambassador, just as it was for your distant compatriot Birgitta, so that as you have just stated, good relations between the country you represent and the Holy See may be strengthened.

In your country, after years of sometimes difficult social reorganization when everyone had to make sacrifices for the collective good, a new solidarity has been established between people so that each may justly have what he or she needs in order to live in freedom and dignity. This has led your fellow citizens to make choices that do them honour, with a view to a fraternal and more equitable distribution of work and wealth within the national community.

I have kept a vivid memory of the Pastoral Visit I had the joy of making to your country in 1989. During this visit I was able once again to observe the Swedish capacity for hospitality and dialogue; they are anxious to make cultural and religious pluralism the law. Following the example of St Birgitta who strove to bring the different religious creeds together, the religious service in the cathedral of Uppsala testifies to the fact that the Spirit is working in human hearts to unite peoples.

For their part, the authorities of your country are keen that each Christian community should enjoy freedom and the necessary means for its mission. The dynamic fraternal relations between Catholics and Lutherans, in parishes as well as in movements, allow respect, recognition, and mutual love to grow. They are the necessary way to the unity Christ desired, a unity to which a great number of Swedes aspire. These relations are also bearing concrete fruit in the collaboration between the Government and Caritas, to come to the aid of the neediest in the Third World, as well as of the refugees who find in your land a pleasant place to live.

I am sure that you will continue the task undertaken by your predecessors and that you will develop it still further. For the success of the mission that has been entrusted to you, you know that you can count on my coworkers' welcome and their kind assistance.

I should be grateful if you would convey my respectful greetings to Their Majesties King Carl Gustav and Queen Silvia, whom I had the joy of receiving here on 3 May 1991, and assure them of my fervent wishes for themselves, their

Through the intercession of St Brigitta to whom all are still strongly attached, I invoke God's

blessing on yourself, those dear to you, your assistants, and all the Swedish people.

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