



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR KIM HEUNG-SOO,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF KOREA TO THE HOLY SEE****

Monday, 10 July 1995

Your Excellency,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Korea to the Holy See. I am also grateful for the good wishes you convey from His Excellency President Kim Young Sam, to whom I express my own greetings together with the assurance of my prayers.

Your presence here today evokes vivid memories of my two Pastoral Visits to Korea. I treasure still the warmth and hospitality with which I was received by the people of the "Land of Morning Calm", and I remember the good will, courtesy and industriousness which are so characteristic of them. I know too the pain and suffering which the present state of division causes them. Fully sharing your desire to see the Korean Peninsula once again united, I encourage your Government to persevere in its commitment to work for a peaceful resolution of the current situation. Policies ensuring sincere dialogue, openness and collaboration offer the only real possibility of arriving at just and lasting solutions to conflicts and disputes. Only in this way can authentic freedom be guaranteed and awareness of the dignity of the human person be fostered.

The world is fast approaching the dawn of a new millennium, and it is the Holy See's fervent hope that this significant occasion will usher in a new era of peace and understanding. The increase in co-operation between individual nations and international organizations in addressing many of the world's more pressing problems offers positive indications that this hope can become a reality. Joint efforts show that members of the world community are becoming ever more aware of their interdependence. The economic, social and political difficulties faced by individual countries not

only affect those countries but have an impact on the whole family of nations.

It has never been truer that when the peace of one is threatened, the peace of all is endangered. And today, despite the many profound and constructive changes which recent history has recorded, there still remain myriad situations representing very real threats to peace: situations where fundamental human rights are ignored; where the integral well-being of the human person is not recognized, promoted and safeguarded; where the common good is subordinated to special interests; where the poor are exploited by the rich, the weak by the strong, the innocent by the unscrupulous; where individuals are made victims of science and technology rather than beneficiaries of the progress and development which human genius has generated.

In all such circumstances, questions are raised which have definite ethical and moral implications, especially regarding the unique value of every human life and the inviolability of human dignity. As I said in my *Message for the World Day of Peace* earlier this year, "Work for peace cannot be concerned merely with the external conditions of coexistence; rather, it must affect people's hearts and appeal to a new awareness of human dignity" (John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1995*, 1 [8 Dec. 1994]).

It is precisely this "new awareness of human dignity" which constitutes the basis of the Holy See's activity in the sphere of international diplomacy and which inspires its efforts to foster reverence for humanity. When the inalienable rights of human beings are respected, injustice and aggression are seen for what they really are, namely, arrogance which easily degenerates into a moral chaos and which, if not checked, will sooner or later make victims of everyone.

One of the fundamental human rights which must be cherished and safeguarded is the right to religious freedom. Such freedom has enabled Catholics in Korea to make significant contributions to all sectors of society: in government, in civil and military service, in schools, in hospitals and other health-care facilities, in the home, in business and industry. Their work is ultimately aimed at the glory of God and inspired by love of neighbour. The efforts of the Catholic Church in Korea serve to reinforce that respect for human dignity which is at the basis of all peace and prosperity. The preservation and strengthening of the good relations between Church and State can only redound to the common good, which, as the Second Vatican Council observed, "comprises the sum of the conditions of social life which enable individuals, families and associations to reach their own perfection more completely and more readily" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 74).

Your Excellency, I am confident that your service as the Representative of the Republic of Korea will benefit both your nation and the Holy See in the common quest to build a civilization truly worthy of the human person. I assure you that the offices of the Roman Curia will co-operate with you in the discharge of your responsibilities. I pray that in his loving kindness Almighty God will abundantly bless you, your family, your country and all the people of Korea.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XVIII, 2 p.79-81.

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