



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II  
TO H.E. Mr JAN G. JOLLE, NEW AMBASSADOR  
OF NORWAY TO THE HOLY SEE\***

*Saturday, 25 March 1995*

*Mr Ambassador,*

I am pleased to offer Your Excellency a cordial welcome as you present your Letters of Credence as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Norway to the Holy See. I ask you to thank His Majesty King Harald V for his good wishes, convey my own greetings and assure him of my prayers for all the citizens of your beloved Country.

As Your Excellency has pointed out, this year's millennium celebration of the arrival of Christianity in Norway offers an occasion to recall the spiritual foundation upon which the splendid edifice of European civilization is built. In your nation, as throughout the continent, the Christian faith significantly shaped the entire life of society. The Christian message provided Europe's diverse peoples with the inspiration to develop a culture based on a vision of man's primordial place in God's design, a vision which emphasizes each individual's "essential dignity and with it the capacity to transcend every social order so as to move towards truth and goodness" (John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 38). Thus Christianity transformed those peoples from within, according to the demands of the twofold commandment of love of God and neighbour (cf. Mk. 12:30-31), demands which encompass those values to which Your Excellency has referred: respect for human rights, preservation of freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

Today the future of European civilization greatly depends on the resolute defence and promotion of the life-giving values which are the core of its cultural patrimony. As innumerable tragic events of the twentieth century have shown, whenever a society denies or disregards the providential design inscribed in the order of creation, reverence for human life and dignity is inevitably compromised. Until now, Western civilization has been deeply imbued with the firm conviction that

respect for the natural law is the indispensable basis for building a just and free society, capable of caring in a special way for its weakest members. It was understood that only a society which recognizes certain norms of behaviour as valid always and for everyone can guarantee the necessary ethical foundation of social coexistence. In fulfilling her spiritual mission in the public sphere, the Church therefore cannot fail to invite all men and women of good will to take into account the inescapable moral dimension of political, social and economic policies and decisions, which are never exclusively technical and neutral but morally acceptable or objectionable according to whether they defend and promote human dignity or go against it.

Happily the recent World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen, placed new emphasis on the principle that the human person is at the centre of sustainable development, and it underlined the fact that aid for social development will be effective only if it respects the religious, ethical and cultural patrimony of peoples, so as not to become a factor of social fragmentation. It is important to avoid building the economy, whether in developed or developing societies, on the basis of induced needs, fed by a consumerist mentality whereby people are dominated by a desire for material goods and a comfortable life, a tendency which has the effect of blinding them to the needs of others (cf. John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 1993*, 5 [8 Dec. 1992]). Genuine human development depends less on the quantity of goods available than on an increased level of education and training, on an increased capacity to arrive freely at the decisions which determine one's existence, and on an increase of opportunities to share directly in the general life of the community and nation to which one belongs. If as a result of the Copenhagen Summit public opinion becomes more sensitive to the true nature of development and solidarity, there is reason to hope that a new era of co-operation for the integral well-being of the human family can begin. It is my confident hope that Norway, with its strong tradition of generous support to the developing world, will continue to promote just such a sensitivity in the international arena.

I also share the hope expressed by Your Excellency that the bonds between the Holy See and the Kingdom of Norway will grow ever stronger. I know that the Catholics of your Nation – inspired and guided by their faith – willingly take part in the many social and educational initiatives which mirror Norway's millennial heritage of Christian values: care for the marginalized, the handicapped and the elderly, defence of the rights of women and minorities, solidarity with the poor and with refugees, and all those activities which serve to strengthen the family as the basic unit of society.

Mr Ambassador, as you begin your mission within the diplomatic community accredited to the Holy See, I offer you my prayerful good wishes. The various departments of the Roman Curia will always be ready to assist you in the carrying out of your duties. In renewing the expression of my esteem for His Majesty the King and for the people of Norway, I invoke upon your nation the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

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\**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XVIII, 1 p.856-858.

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