



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E Mr MANUEL MAS RIBÓ,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF ANDORRA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 28 May 1998

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am pleased to receive the Letters of Credence appointing you as the first Ambassador of the Principality of Andorra to the Holy See. In offering you my cordial welcome on this occasion, I would like, through you, to meet a beloved people surrounded by the Pyrenees, with deep Christian roots, who from their origins has always maintained a very special bond with this Apostolic See.

In fact, as you also recalled, history teaches that close union with the Church was decisive in the birth of Andorra as an autonomous country, in the defence of its independence down the centuries and in the consolidation of its identity as a people. Christian tradition and moral values have forged the life- style of its inhabitants, who are particularly appreciated for their openness to dialogue, hospitality and cultural exchange.

2. In recent years considerable efforts have been made to improve and adapt to contemporary circumstances the constitutional and juridical provisions governing the community, thereby guaranteeing the identity of the principality and its active presence in the concert of nations. This process was bound to include the establishment of formal relations with the Holy See in order to strengthen and increase a close co-operation that will redound to the benefit of the human, social and spiritual progress of all the children of this noble people, in a climate of respect, understanding and dialogue.

3. These relations lay the institutional and juridical foundation that make it possible to work more effectively for the common good of the Andorran people, whom the other institutions are meant to serve. The contribution of the Church, so much a part of the history and society of the principality, stems from her firm conviction that "faith throws a new light on all things and makes known the full ideal which God has set for man, thus guiding the mind towards solutions that are fully human" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 11). For this reason, on the basis of her total and transcendent vision of man, she will

never tire of encouraging all initiatives that promote the inalienable dignity of individuals as children of God redeemed by the blood of Christ. By fulfilling her mission, without encroaching on or usurping the responsibility of the civil authorities, she will encourage people to lead a life in accord with their vocation and to build an increasingly human society.

In her relations with States, the Church does not seek privileges, nor does she pursue any interests other than the good of individuals and peoples, whose future depends chiefly on their ability to embody the fundamental values of freedom, justice and solidarity on which every peaceful society and authentically human progress is based.

In this regard, the Church in Andorra carries out an important educational role at various levels, which we hope will be strengthened in the future through more appropriate measures. In fact, the new generations must not lack a sound, well-organized formation which enables them to grow in harmony with the deep convictions of their ancestors, who, jealous of their freedom, lovers of their homeland and devoted to their Catholic faith, were able to keep the principality united, prosperous and, at the same time, open to history. This will be the best guarantee for the future of a nation which aspires to no other greatness than the nobility of its people.

4. The Christian roots and moral values that have characterized Andorra throughout history can also make a valuable contribution to the international order and to building the new Europe, whose institutions it has recently joined. This fact is important for everyone, because it is born of the belief that nothing must be done without first listening to all voices, and that no one can avoid facing the great responsibilities of the present historical moment. The community of the principality has also wished to take its proper role in the world, to contribute its experience and age-old wisdom to the task of strengthening the foundations of peaceful coexistence between peoples in the context of justice and solidarity. I fervently hope that this aspect of diplomatic relations will also serve as an effective way to promote in international institutions the basic values that enable man to live in accord with his own authentic dignity and to build, on the threshold of the third millennium, the new global civilization of life and love.

5. Mr Ambassador, before ending this meeting, I would like to assure you of my esteem and appreciation, along with my most cordial wishes that the important mission entrusted to you will be fruitful for your country. Please convey these sentiments and wishes to the distinguished authorities of Andorra. I pray through the intercession of Our Lady of Maritxell, the principality's heavenly patroness, that the Almighty will assist with his gifts you, your family, your co-workers, the governors of the principality and the beloved people of Andorra, who are ever close to the Pope's heart.

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