



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF HUNGARY
ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 24 October 2002

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am happy to welcome you for the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Hungary to the Holy See and I thank you for your courteous words. I would be grateful if you would convey to President Ferenc Mádl and the members of Government my thanks for their cordial greetings. As I fondly recall his recent visit to the Vatican, I wish to assure the President of Hungary of my best wishes for himself, for the country's leaders and for the entire Hungarian people.

2. Mr Ambassador, you have just recalled the rich history of your country and its bonds with the Apostolic See. After the painful ruptures caused during the last century by the two World Wars and after the dark years of Communist dictatorship, Hungary has recovered the possibility of freely determining its own future. During the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, your nation solemnly celebrated the millennium of its foundation and of its Baptism under King St Stephen I. This was an exceptional opportunity to manifest national unity and to recall how the nation draws from its religious roots the strength to build a society where each one is recognised and respected and is able to take part in the democratic life of the country. As you have stressed, the Church shares the hopes and sufferings of the Hungarian people, and has accompanied them during the difficulties that have marked their history.

Today she too rejoices to have recovered her freedom of action in Hungarian society, especially thanks to the accords signed with successive governments, that demonstrate the cordial relations, distinguished by respect and mutual confidence, that are restored between the Catholic Church and the country's authorities.

3. Hungary is engaged in a great movement for the reform and rebuilding of national life in all its components. Among them there is the family, basic cell of social life, which it is important to support and assist, especially when financial difficulties affect its most impoverished members. Through her institutions, the Church makes her own contribution to social welfare and outreach to the poorest of society; she does not fail to support the institution of the family, recalling in her teaching the greatness of marriage and the family.

The future of a people is already defined by the attention it pays to its youngest members and to their education. It is indispensable to pass on to the young the civil, moral and spiritual values that have forged generations of Hungarian hearts, while you prepare the young to live in an open, secularised world that is characterized by selfishness and the desire for material possessions. Although this educational enterprise is primarily a family responsibility, it also involves the responsibility of the nation, through schools and all who collaborate with them. The Church, who has ever taken great care of young people, in your country has a vast network of schools through which she takes part in this work of education, and in this regard you can always count on her availability.

4. Your country, Mr Ambassador, has now re-established its economic, political and cultural links with its European neighbours, and is a candidate for future membership in the European Union. The Holy See is delighted at the prospect of this extension of the Union that should allow the gradual re-establishment of the unity of Europe for a time shattered by the partitioning of the Yalta Conference and the closure of the Soviet bloc. Only the free circulation of people and goods, as well as the dialogue of cultures and the exchange of spiritual treasures among nations can overcome the fear, withdrawal into self and national narrow-mindedness that, even in the recent past, have given rise to many hostilities throughout the European continent, and even more so on a global scale.

Your nation knows well, and its recent history has made it particularly sensitive to respect for minorities, since today many people of Hungarian origin and culture live in other countries than their own. This is a permanent concern which impels the authorities to continue persistently to find the means of dialogue in order to assure their citizens the best living conditions possible and respect for their culture. Vice versa, this same concern demands that Hungary show attention and respect for those in Hungary who may belong to culturally different minorities. The Apostolic See, attentive to this situation of cultural diversity, never stops urging the leaders of nations and religious leaders to open a courageous dialogue that is the only way to prevail over friction between people and prepare everyone for a future of justice and peace.

I hope that in witnessing to its history and rich cultural identity, your country may help the future Europe to be not just a vast market of material goods but also a living expression of a wealth of the cultural and spiritual treasures that belong to each nation that can be shared for the benefit of the Union. This is an important responsibility of European nations, even for people of other

continents who would also like to join forces and wealth and to serve development and peace.

5. Your Excellency, through you, I wish to greet the Catholic community of Hungary and its Pastors. I assure them of the prayer and spiritual closeness of the Successor of Peter, and I encourage them without pause to proclaim the call of the Gospel, especially among the young who seek to find the meaning of life and desire to dedicate themselves to serving their brethren. I know that Catholics play a full part in the life of the nation, in accord with their vocation. May they be faithful to the example of the great saints who have marked their history, such as St Stephen, St Elizabeth and the Bishop Vilmos Apor, whom I had the joy of beatifying recently, and of all the witnesses to the faith during the persecution of the Communist regime. Among them stands out the late Cardinal József Mindszenty of venerable memory!

6. Your Excellency, at the time when you are beginning your noble mission, I assure you of the availability of all my collaborators, and I wish you all the best as you foster good relations between Hungary and the Holy See!

Upon you, your family and those who work with you, and upon the entire Hungarian people, I invoke an abundance of God's blessings.

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