



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR FERENC GYURCSÁNY
PRIME MINISTER OF HUNGARY***

Saturday, 18 December 2004

Mr Prime Minister, I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and I thank you for your kind greetings. With Hungary's entrance in the European Union this year, a significant new chapter has now opened in her history. I am confident that your country will make a specific contribution to the future of this Continent by drawing upon the rich patrimony of cultural and spiritual values which, from the time of Saint Stephen, have formed the soul of the Hungarian people. In this regard I think especially of the young people of your nation, and the importance of their training in sound moral and civic virtues. This is an area of particular concern to the Church as she seeks to contribute to the common good in the fulfilment of her religious and educational mission. I am therefore most appreciative of the series of juridical agreements entered into by Hungary and the Holy See in recent years, particularly the *Agreement on Financing the Activities of Public Service and other Religious Activities undertaken in Hungary by the Catholic Church*. That Agreement defines in a juridically binding way the role of the Church in an important area of Hungarian society, with due respect for the human rights to religious freedom and to education. It is my hope that a spirit of constructive cooperation will continue to mark the work of both Church and State in the task of implementing faithfully what was negotiated and agreed upon. With gratitude for your visit I offer Your Excellency the assurance of my prayers for all the beloved Hungarian people, and I cordially invoke upon the nation God's blessings of prosperity and

peace.

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