



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE AMBASSADOR OF SWEDEN
TO THE HOLY SEE****

Thursday, 24 March 1983

Mr Ambassador,

It is a great pleasure for me to accept the Letters which accredit you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Sweden. I truly appreciate the good wishes that you extend on behalf of His Majesty King Carl Gustaf XVI and I would ask you to assure him of my own cordial sentiments of respect and esteem.

The historical nature of our meeting today must be acknowledged and noted in all its significance. The first ties between the Holy See and Sweden go back centuries. This fact alone gives special importance to your presence here at the Vatican. Yet still more meaning is to be found in the expectation that our encounter will mark the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the relations between your country and the Holy See.

As you have just noted, over the years the Holy See and Sweden have not been deprived of informal contacts on various matters of common interest. Our joint participation in international organisation has provided the forum for mutual interaction and collaboration. But now that bilateral relations have been established, we are able to engage even more closely in friendly exchange and productive co-operation.

You have rightly stated that the evangelical zeal of Catholic missionaries some thousand years ago has left an indelible imprint on the history and traditions of Sweden. The cultural and religious heritage of your country has been greatly enriched by the labours of those early pioneers in the Christian faith. Rome, in its turn, has been enriched by the activity and influence of Saint Birgitta and her daughter Catherine, and in later times by the presence of Queen Christina.

Thanks to the climate of religious freedom and the ecumenical spirit of brotherhood existing among Christians in your country today, the Catholics in Sweden are happy to be able to work together with members of other Churches and ecclesial communities for the promotion of those spiritual and moral values of the Gospel that serve the common good.

One of the most precious legacies of your Christian tradition has been the desire of the Swedish people to live and work in peace. In fact, this steadfast desire is a praiseworthy characteristic of your country in the present age. Swedes have remained in the forefront of those who strive to achieve a just and peaceful international order. Such a situation has enabled Sweden to hold a privileged position within the family of nations, allowing her to be a fertile ground in which the roots of harmony and mutual understanding among nations can grow strong and prosper.

In this regard, I am eager to reaffirm the position of the Holy See in encouraging all legitimate initiatives which promote and further peace in our world. As you have so wisely observed, the work of building a peaceful world cannot be limited exclusively to the question of disarmament; it must be joined to efforts to bring freedom to the oppressed and to help in the pursuit of their integral development those peoples who suffer from hunger, disease and ignorance.

Mr Ambassador, I am happy to reiterate my welcome to you today and to pledge the support of the Holy See for the goals which have been set out for you in this mission. It is my earnest desire that through the expression of good will which the establishment of diplomatic relations implies the Holy See and Sweden may be joined even closer in bonds of friendship and mutual collaboration. For the success of this common venture I ask God's abundant blessings.

*AAS 75 (1983), p. 560-561. *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. VI, 1 pp. 802-803. *L'Attività della Santa Sede* 1983 pp. 226-227. *L'Osservatore Romano* 25.3.1983 pp.1, 2. *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English* n.15 p.4. ©

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