



The Holy See

***DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
A S.E. IL SIGNOR GUNNAR SCHACK LARSEN,
NUOVO AMBASCIATORE DI DANIMARCA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE****

Giovedì, 20 ottobre 1988

Mr. Ambassador,

It is certainly a joy for me to welcome you as the Permanent and Plenipotentiary Representative of Queen Margrethe II to the Holy See. May it please Your Excellency to express to Her Majesty my respectful gratitude for her warm wishes in my regard, and my great satisfaction for her having chosen you for the noble mission of which this ceremony marks only the beginning.

At this time, as you inaugurate your noble mission to the Holy See, I am happy to see that you embark upon it with the spirit that should animate all diplomatic activity. Relations between Governments and the Apostolic See are even more profitable when they rest on common conceptions of the integral respect for the whole person and for all peoples. The facts have all too often shown the tragic consequences when this sacred principle is forgotten or despised. I am sure, Mr. Ambassador, that in perfect harmony with the leaders of your nation, you will work - according to the means proper to diplomacy - for new progress of the ideals which give value to a civilization and the real welfare of humanity. Every country that strives to educate its citizens, at all stages of their life, in moral values such as respect, tolerance, the spirit of sharing, fidelity to commitments, is a country of true belief. It is rather this moral capital, more than any economic power, which is a nation's wealth, worthy to be passed on to future generations and which make it shine forth even beyond its borders.

How could I fail to be moved by the words Your Excellency just spoke regarding the persevering activity of the Holy See in the fields of respect for human rights, the establishment of a more effective justice, and solidarity with the most disenfranchised populations? I know that your

remarks, Mr. Ambassador, are the echo of convictions that inspire both your Government and the Danish people.

The Holy See follows with great interest the efforts carried on by many nations to bring about, in spite of obstacles, a truly fraternal civilization with effective respect for freedom, truly understood, and a better distribution of goods. I am happy to extend my congratulations, through your person, to the whole of Denmark for being one of the countries devoting the greatest percentage of their national revenue to aid to developing countries.

I had the opportunity to point out, during my recent visit to the European Institutions at Strasbourg, that the Christian roots of the nations of the old continent constitute an essential source for the understanding of man, for the flowering of culture, and the orientation of public action. Denmark has an ancient Christian tradition, and its contribution blends well with the effort leading Europe at the same time to recover its own identity and to give the best of itself in its relations with all nations.

I think today particularly of the Catholic community of Denmark, not very numerous, but no less close to me. It is a great source of satisfaction to know that they live in good relations with the rest of their countrymen.

In these next few days, an event will take place that will draw attention to the Christian witness of your nation, the beatification of Niels Stensen, Danish scholar and churchman who will be honoured as an important example for the whole Church. You yourself have emphasized the importance of this act of the Successor of Peter, and I am happy for that.

In your address, I also note the mention you made of the ecumenical movement. Your countrymen are very much involved and the Holy See, for its part, promotes it. I hope that the dialogue between Christians of different confessions continues to develop, in your country and elsewhere, in the search for truth, in mutual respect, and in the various forms of cooperation possible on the road to unity.

Mr. Ambassador, you kindly said that Denmark waits with hope for the visit I will make there next year.

I am happy to have so soon some direct contact with the Catholics of Denmark, and also with all the Danish people and their leaders; I would like to thank them, in your person, for sincerely wanting to facilitate the plans for my trip.

Your Excellency, at the beginning of your mission to the Apostolic See, I wish that you may find in its accomplishment all the satisfaction that you hope for. Be assured of the availability of my collaborators who will welcome you willingly and will strive to facilitate your task.

Please communicate to Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II my best wishes for herself, her family and for all the Danish people. I entrust these wishes to the Lord and I pray that he may bless Denmark.

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