



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr LEE SIE YONG
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA
TO THE HOLY SEE***

Friday, 30 March 1990

Mr Ambassador,

Your presence here today represents a further strengthening of the cordial ties existing between the Republic of Korea and the Holy See. It gives me great pleasure therefore to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed your country's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary. I am grateful for the kind words you have spoken regarding the role of the Holy See in the international community and in particular for the greetings you have conveyed on behalf of President Roh Tae Woo. I would ask you kindly to assure His Excellency of my own good wishes.

As Bishop of Rome with special responsibility for the Church in every part of the world, I have had the happy and consoling grace of visiting your country on two occasions, in 1984 and again last year on the occasion of the Forty-fourth International Eucharistic Congress. I have been able to see at first hand the challenges facing your people in their search for a more just and peaceful society. I am aware of the Korean people's desire for reunification in a spirit of mature democracy and respect for human rights. Your Excellency has expressed the hope, which we all share, that the processes of openness and dialogue which have brought a lessening of tensions and greater freedom elsewhere will eventually bring more peaceful conditions to your own country. May Almighty God sustain the Korean people in their hope and in their persevering journey towards this goal.

In many parts of the world radical transformations are giving rise to new forms of political organization and new relations between nations and blocs. That process is the tangible expression of these peoples' irrepressible thirst for freedom: freedom of thought, conscience, religion,

expression, and political and cultural pluralism. These are eminent aspirations of the human spirit which, of themselves, should lead to a strengthening and perfecting of the unity of the human family.

Unfortunately, the processes to which we refer are not without their handicaps. Past experiences have left the heritage of a widespread and profound crisis of trust between individuals, and between peoples and States. As a result, old ethnic and nationalist rivalries come to the fore and threaten the positive achievements emanating from the decline of ideological opposition. The international community needs to recall that policies based on ambition, self-interest, competition and material greed have not led to peace and development, and that these tendencies need to be replaced by a truly universal solidarity and effective respect for human rights.

Allow me, Mr Ambassador, to refer to one urgent form of the new solidarity required for the very survival of our world, namely, the adoption by all of a moral approach to the use of the environment based on the acceptance of nature as God's creation and gift, destined to be shared by all. People everywhere are becoming more sensitive to this question and I have drawn attention to it on a number of occasions, most recently in my Message for this year's World Day of Peace. The defense of the environment is a global problem and its solution calls for responsible action on the part of all States, both within their own borders and in conjunction with other States, in effectively implementing scientifically based and internationally agreed standards. The solidarity that is required must truly be universal, for " the newly industrialized States cannot, for example, be asked to apply restrictive environmental standards to their emerging industries unless the industrialized States first apply them within their own boundaries. At the same time, countries in the process of industrialization are not morally free to repeat the errors made in the past by others, and recklessly continue to damage the environment through industrial pollutants, radical deforestation or unlimited exploitation of non-renewable resources " (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Nuntius ob diem ad pacem fovendam dicatum pro a. D. 1990*, 10, die 8 dec. 1989: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XII, 2 [1989] 1469).

In an increasingly interdependent and complex world, the reality of progress which cannot be measured merely by the growth of material well-being but must provide for the realization of the highest aspirations of the human spirit needs to extend to all countries and to embrace all peoples. It should be the conviction of everyone that the obstacles to such integral development are not merely economic but rest on more profound attitudes the moral and spiritual attitudes which define each individual's relationship with self, with others and with nature itself (Cfr. EIUSDEM *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38).

The activity of the Holy See in the international forum seeks to favor the pursuit of these higher values in relations between peoples for the common good of the human family. The Holy See wishes to be a voice raised in defense of peace, of solidarity and of compassion towards those in greatest need.

In your own country the Church seeks to fulfill her duty to the human family by fostering awareness that these same values should inspire public and private life. Although a minority, the Catholics of Korea play a visible role in the life of the nation. They love their country and are deeply committed to its well-being. Their faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ impels them to be instruments of peace and reconciliation, and to work for the growth of justice and right in society.

Mr Ambassador, as you begin your mission to the Holy See I offer you my prayers for your country and its beloved people. I wish you well in the exercise of your duties and assure you of the collaboration of the various departments of the Holy See. May the blessings of God be upon you and your loved ones.

*AAS 82 (1990), p.983-985.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XIII, 1 pp. 791-794.

L'Attività della Santa Sede 1990 pp. 228-229.

L'Osservatore Romano 31.3.1990 p.5.

L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n.15 p.13.

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