



The Holy See

***DISCOURS DU SAINT-PÈRE JEAN-PAUL II
À S. Exc. MONSIEUR ALAIN PIERRET,
NOUVEL AMBASSADEUR DE FRANCE PRÈS LE SAINT-SIÈGE****

Jeudi 25 novembre 1993

Mr. Ambassador,

1: On the occasion of this ceremony for the presentation of the letters accrediting Your Excellency as Ambassador of the French Republic to the Holy See, it is a pleasure for me to welcome you to Rome. I am happy to express my sincere thanks to you for the words which you addressed to me, touching on a number of topics which are very dear to me.

Through you, Mr. Ambassador, I would like to address a respectful greeting to His Excellency the President of the French Republic, as well as to the members of the Government. I would be most grateful if you would convey to the Head of State my best wishes for his person and for the prosperity and happiness of his fellow citizens.

You recalled, Mr. Ambassador, that France borders on the Mediterranean world, which experienced the flowering of the greatest civilizations and on whose paths Christianity arrived very early in its history. It continues to show its interest in the countries which border on the "Mare nostrum". You also mentioned the flowering of saints who were born on your country's soil: from St Denis and St Genevieve to St Francis de Sales and St Louise de Marillac, not to forget, very recently again, St Claudine Thevenet or St Marie-Louise de Jesus Trichet, there have been numerous saints who devoted their energies and talents to proclaiming the Good News of the risen Christ and who were apostles to their contemporaries. The great number of religious foundations, from the Middle Ages to our own century, the missionary fervour which brought your fellow countrymen to the five continents, the concern for profound intellectual research, all of this has contributed to implanting French Catholicism deep in the life of the nation. It is my sincere

hope that this noble heritage remain very much alive in the awareness of your compatriots and that it never cease to stimulate their faith, their hope and their charity. The Catholics of France today still have to pass on what they have received to borrow a Pauline expression.

In welcoming you, Mr. Ambassador, I wish to greet the entire body of French Catholics, with a particular thought for your compatriots who live in Rome many of whom are my collaborators.

2. On a number of occasions I have had the opportunity to tread the soil of your country as the Successor of Peter. I wanted to tell the faithful of France that I was aware of the difficulties which they were then experiencing, but also of the quality of their faith, which several encouraging signs have recently confirmed. The foundation of new movements and new communities, animated by a generous Gospel spirit, the development of charitable action in the service of the most deprived both at home and abroad the missionary concern which was expressed by the works of the recent diocesan synods witness to the vitality of the Church's members in France.

3. In your discourse, Mr. Ambassador, you stressed several aspects of the contribution that France wishes to make within the concert of nations. Certain recent events of international relevance have once again shown that it was possible, through negotiation, to make the silence of a just peace reign where before the noise of arms resounded, to dress wounds where before they continued to multiply, to seek the ways of justice where before violent antagonisms prevailed. The Holy See, for its part, is anxious to encourage all the efforts being made at every level by the different nations as well as by the international agencies. to affirm that justice and solidarity should be the basis for building a truly human civilization.

4. Mr. Ambassador, you yourself have described the difficulties which French society is now experiencing, as is the whole of Europe. The Church can only join in the efforts being made to ensure that all the inhabitants of this continent maintain their hope and a sense of solidarity. The European nations know that they should coordinate their efforts to surmount the obstacles that have arisen in the present economic and social situation so that they may guarantee all their inhabitants the means of leading an honest life in conditions which respect and promote their dignity.

This collaboration, based on the recognition of true values, should produce a surplus of the real and the ideal, gather dispersed energies and turn this entire continent into a place of peace, justice and freedom, in the spirit of the motto of my predecessor Pope Pius XII, which I love to recall: *Opus iustitiae pax*. If peace is the fruit of justice, the players on the international scene should somehow manage together to quell the conflicts that are causing bloodshed in some nearby lands. You were saying yourself that your country participates, like the Holy See, in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and in the process that extends it in order to seek peace on this continent. May these efforts finally succeed in subduing the destructive clashes that are affecting the poorest of the poor, reducing whole sections of humanity's heritage to ruin,

and destroying the social harmony of peoples!

5. In many countries of Africa and Asia, in those so-called Third World countries whose immense human and spiritual resources my Pastoral Visits have enabled me to appreciate, France is actively collaborating. You yourself recalled the admirable and often unrecognized work accomplished by missionaries, educators and pioneers who come from your nation to place themselves at the service of their brothers and sisters of other lands. With patience and perseverance, we must continue to work so that all may have access to education and to health care, so that institutions may encourage the sane exercise of freedom and the promotion of responsible initiatives by men and women of every people. I have good hope that your nation's spirit of active and enlightened solidarity will contribute, in many still underprivileged developing countries, to helping the local people take charge of the operations necessary for their development.

6. Your stay in the Eternal City, which welcomes so many sons from all over the world, will enable you to see first hand the thirst for peace and social harmony which everyone feels. In the service of a humanity which is seeking, sometimes confused and grippingly, its future path, the Apostolic See wishes to make its own contribution and is happy to acknowledge that, through the presence of their representatives, many countries are eager to follow the actions which inspire her spiritual mission.

I am happy to assure you, Mr. Ambassador, that you can count on the active collaboration of those who, at my side, devote themselves to enabling the Successor of Peter to fulfil the responsibilities which he has been given.

Mr. Ambassador, I offer you my best wishes for the accomplishment of your high mission. To you personally as well as to your loved ones and your coworkers, I wholeheartedly grant my Apostolic Blessing.

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