



The Holy See

*ADDRESS OF PAUL VI TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ACCREDITED TO THE HOLY SEE**

Saturday, 11 January 1969

Excellencies, Gentlemen:

We thank your spokesman for the fine and noble words which he has addressed to Us in your name. He has used an apt expression in describing you, the Diplomatic Corps, he said, constitutes «something like a family». This is just how We also see you. And it is entirely normal that at the beginning of a new year a family reunion should be held for the exchange of traditional good wishes. We are grateful for those you have presented to Us. With a full heart, We offer to you those which We in our turn formulate for yourselves, your families and for your respective countries.

This annual reunion invites Us to pose to you a question which is not new but which it is always useful so raise because it is able to furnish excellent material for reflection. The question is the following: Inasmuch as your respective nations have judged it good and opportune to maintain diplomatic relations with the Holy See, and inasmuch as relations of this sort are justified only if they serve the common good of society, or in other words if they are of use to the great causes of mankind and the solutions of the problems involved, how can we mutually help each other to achieve this goal?

The answer to this question is not as simple as it may at first seem, because the activities of the two parties involved are not exercised at the same level. The governments pursue interests of the temporal order, while the Holy Sec pursues goals which are principally of the spiritual order. And here we touch upon a characteristic aspect which is unique, which is not found in the relations of the nations with each other, but which is found to be true of each of them in their relations with the Holy See – the encounter of the temporal and the spiritual.

This difference of levels, which might seem to compromise the chances of a happy collaboration, instead guarantees them in a most excellent way. Because the two levels complement and call to one another in such a way that one can say that normally the two parties involved, far from pursuing contrasting of divergent interests, are in advance in agreement on the essence of the goals to be attained.

What are these goals? Of two kinds, it seems to Us: on the one hand, the good of each people taken individually; on the other hand, the common good of humanity.

For each people, inasmuch as the Holy See does not seek any personal advantage but rather the advantage of the people themselves, the collaboration normally ought to be the easiest possible; what do temporal authorities themselves propose if not the good of their own people? The spiritual good and the temporal good are not opposed to each other, they are harmonized within the overall vision of the person and of human society. And what to say of the collaboration between the Holy See and the nations at the level of the common good of all humanity? Your dean has rightly insisted on this point and has emphasized it with rather grand expressions, too flattering without doubt in describing the efforts of Our modest person but certainly not inadequate for conveying the concern and the ardent desires of the Apostolic See. The questions involved are indeed too grave not to call for the concerted action of all men of courage throughout the whole world. It is a question definitely of the destiny of the world: of guaranteeing the human rights of all, of promoting the interests of the more weak, of educating all men to collaborate with one another, of achieving disarmament, of making liberty and justice reign everywhere, and finally and especially of the immense question which seems in itself to be a resume and to dominate all others: the question of peace. «Long and difficult battle», your distinguished spokesman has justly called it! We add: battle to be fought every day, victory to be sought endlessly, because the demon of discord will never be completely exorcised.

But, let Us here before you, halt Our glance rather at what may serve to stimulate and to encourage in the collaboration which ought to characterize our mutual efforts. Is it too optimistic to judge that the files of war are presently, thanks to God, on the way to extinction? Is it foolish to hope that the laborious negotiations at Paris will without too much delay bring to suffering Vietnam the peace to which it has for so long aspired? We wish also to believe, as We said in our response at Christmas to the good wishes of the Sacred College, that similar negotiations will finally be opened in Africa on the subject of the Nigerian conflict. The Middle East remains without doubt a source of grave preoccupations, but the general eagerness, shown in regard to this topic since the recent developments, has revealed how the desire for peace is deeply rooted in consciences and in public opinion. There also We wish to welcome these symptoms as a glimmer of hope and the sign of happily improving relations.

If We turn our eyes towards Latin America – and Our recent and unforgettable voyage to Colombia impels Us to do so – it appears impossible to Us, certainly, not to perceive the menaces which

continue to weigh upon the social peace of this immense continent. But We seem to discern, there also, a progress through greater awareness of the problems and better understanding of the need for just reforms. Finally – to finish in Europe – no one dares to say, certainly, that here all is entirely serene and completely pacific. Some unrest has recently been manifested in Northern Ireland. And no one is able to resign himself with a light heart to the attack upon the liberty of a valiant state in Central Europe which has remained since then in the centre of current interest. But in this last case also, is it not comforting to note that the almost unanimous admiration and sympathy of public opinion manifested itself spontaneously in favour of the defence of those values which are the common patrimony of mankind?

In the presence of these mixed sentiments of hope and fear aroused by this brief recall of the menaces weighing upon the peace of the world, We pose the question that We have taken for the theme of this address: you and We – you, the nations, and We, the Holy See – what are we able to do together in this area? Or more precisely, because the question has two aspects: how are you able to help Us, and how are We able to help you?

You are able to help Us by following closely, as you have done, the activity of the Holy See in favour of peace, in being attentive witnesses to whatever the duty of Our responsibility inspires Us to say and do on this subject, in contributing to making this known in your countries and promoting its application. Who does not see, for example, how much the cause of peace would gain by putting into effect on a greater scale the suggestions of the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*? Or of a less timid response to Our appeals for a progressive and reciprocal reduction of armaments? To the constitution of a world fund for development? It seems to us that on these points and others, you, as diplomats with the authority which is attached to your title and your function, you are able to be to Us a precious help by seconding Our action.

And We, what are We able to do for you? Without doubt, first of all, to know you better, to keep Ourselves even better informed of the situation in each of your countries. You can aid Us, also, by furnishing Us analyses and opinions which will permit Us frequently to complement, and if need be to correct, facts provided by wider sources of information and not always accurate. We are happy to have this occasion to thank you for this service. Being well informed is the primary condition for fruitful collaboration.

That which We are able and wish to do especially is to serve ever more and ever better the moral and spiritual well-being of your peoples. And We will continue to employ Ourselves in this way, be it a question of recalling points of doctrine or of the exigencies of morality conforming to the true good of man, be it a question of supporting that which the best energies of each country undertake for the spiritual and cultural elevation of its citizens, for the development in hearts of attitudes favourable to peace and understanding. Therein lies, We believe, the sort of service that people have a right to expect from Us; it is Our specific contribution to the solution of the great human problems of today.

May God help us, Excellencies, Gentlemen! May He render fruitful Our collaboration in everything for the good of all society. We ask this of him with fervour, imploring his assistance on yourselves, your families and your countries, and on the successful accomplishment of your high task throughout the course of this new Year.

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