



# The Holy See

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## *ADDRESS OF PAUL VI TO THE NEW AMBASSADOR OF ITALY TO THE HOLY SEE\**

*Saturday, 5 July 1969*

*Mr Ambassador,*

As We accept the Letters of Credence with which you begin your mission as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Italian Republic to the Holy See, Our deferential thoughts go to the Head of State and the whole people of Italy, who are so near and dear to Us, and of whose sentiments of loyal and open devotion you have just now shown yourself to be an eloquent spokesman. As you succeed and take up the task of your worthy predecessor you also receive the high bottom of representing from now on the nation from which you come, and your presence alone reminds Us of the deep and vital links with which We are bound to it.

The universal character and the pressing gravity of the apostolic ministry cannot make us forget, nor could We could we even forget, the unique, personal, historical relationships of affection, esteem and gratitude that We have with Italy because of Our right of birth, the inheritance We received of family and civic example, and the circumstances of Our humanistic and priestly training. We obviously cannot linger at this moment on each and every reasons that makes Italy so dear to Us. Yet, while briefly considering the wide spectrum of her history, We can never forget the human dignity, the moral wealth, the characteristic genius, the spiritual patrimony of culture and art of that nation, which has been so singularly blessed with gifts from the Creator. We likewise cannot fail to remember the sanctity that has blossomed and flourished there, to honour humanity and for the edification of the universal Church. That holiness has been radiated in the simple, generous and anonymous goodness of those many generations which have guarded the legacy of Catholic tradition, and have safeguarded the values of the spirit, of the family, of education of youth and of moral integrity.

Today We desire to render testimony to those virtues. You present them and recall them to Our

mind. We are grateful to you for this, and We hope and pray that your noble efforts may have the results which the Head of State promised himself when he accredited you to the Holy See and which We also hope for in no less degree.

The considered words which you have just uttered offer Us grounds for reflection and of hope for ever closer collaboration and constructive dialogue between Italy and the Holy See, with respect for the fundamental diversity between their specific missions and full independence for their respective fields of action. It appears to Us that particular effort should be made to evaluate the realities and the significance of the state of affairs that has grown up during these historic decades in relations between Italy and the Apostolic See. We remember with continuing lively admiration the walk done by Our Predecessors Pius XI, who was the chief author of the historic reconciliation, by Pius XII, Defensor Civitatis, and by John XXIII. They all gave very many proofs of affection and regard for Rome and Italy. We have not forgotten the frequent expression of cordiality and applause which the Head of State and the political, solitary and civil authorities have given to Our predecessors of venerable memory and to Ourselves on numerous occasions. Nor can We fail to point out that in this field a balance has been reached which honours both Italy and the Church.

In Our opinion that equilibrium ought to be faithfully maintained because of the benefits which it undoubtedly brings, the spirit of frankness and cooperation which inspires it, and for the sake of maintaining and increasing inward peace of conscience and tranquillity in civil relationship.

The equilibrium between Italy and the Holy See should also be understood and deepened by the play of historical and social vicissitudes. Such development should come about in a situation of autonomy for each of the high parties concerned – as We have already suggested, taking up your own words, Mr Ambassador. That autonomy should be understood as an ever more conscious expression of the freedom due to both, of reciprocal respect and mutual collaboration at points where respective spheres of action meet, and likewise on the historical, cultural and religious planes, where that complementarity cannot be anything but fruitful for the Italian people, as well as for the Church.

We are not unaware, however, that the dialogue, already referred to, between the Holy See and Italy is a delicate one. Your yourself have made some reference to problems concerning bilateral relations which have still to be solved within the bounds of their proper sovereignty and independence. With regard to this, We have let it be known that We do not refuse to examine the possibility and the suitability of reconsidering some clauses of the Concordat, by common accord, with a view to eventual revision through bilateral agreement, while safeguarding the constitutional guarantee assured by the Lateran Pacts, within the juridical framework of the Italian State.

We hope and pray that this may come about in a constructive effort of friendly cooperation, and we wholeheartedly declare that Our sole motive is and always shall be that of proving for the spiritual

good and civil and social betterment of Italy, in a situation of true and constructive peace.

You have made reference to this peace. The Italian people has several times expressed through its President its genuine adhesion to Our work for peace in the world. May Heaven favour it, with the collaboration of all countries truly concerned for the good of humanity. Italy is among those countries, and We know what valuable and efficacious work it does on the level of international organizations and meetings. We pray that with God's help such coordinated activity may achieve happy results.

With these good wishes We welcome you, and We gladly grant your request by sending Our Apostolic Blessing to the President of the Republic, the Government and the entire Italian people.

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\*ORa n.29 p.4.