



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. Mr. VYTAUTAS ALIŠAUSKAS
NEW AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
TO THE HOLY SEE**

Friday, 7 November 2008

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you at the start of your mission and to accept the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Lithuania to the Holy See. I thank you for your kind words and for the greetings you bring from President Valdas Adamkus. Please convey to him my respectful good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for all the people of your nation.

I am particularly heartened by your comments concerning the need for modern Europe to draw upon the tradition that flows from the teaching of the Gospel. Your country has a long and noble Christian history, reaching back to the days of Saint Casimir and beyond. In recent centuries, the faith of the Lithuanian people has sustained them through periods of foreign domination and oppression, and has helped them to preserve and consolidate their identity. Now that the Republic has regained its independence, it can offer moving testimony to the values which enabled its people to survive those difficult years. As my predecessor Pope John Paul II knew from his personal experience, shared faith is a wonderful source of strength and unity in the midst of adversity. Communities that have lived under such circumstances acquire a deep conviction that true happiness is to be found in God alone. They know that any society which denies the Creator inevitably begins to lose its sense of the beauty, truth and goodness of human life.

As Your Excellency has observed, however, a new generation has now grown up in the former Eastern bloc countries, a generation which did not share in that experience of totalitarian government, and tends therefore to take its political freedom for granted. In consequence of this,

there is a risk that some of the fruits which matured in testing times may begin to be lost. Your Excellency understands well the dangers facing today's society which, although free, suffers increasingly from fragmentation and moral confusion. In this context, it is vitally important that Lithuania, and indeed the whole of Europe, cultivates the memory of the history that shaped it, in order to preserve its true identity and thus to survive and flourish in the world of the twenty-first century.

It is both a paradox and a tragedy that in this era of globalization, when the possibilities of communication and interaction with others have increased to a degree that earlier generations could scarcely have imagined, so many people feel isolated and cut off from one another. This gives rise to many social problems which cannot be resolved on the political plane alone, since even the best structures "function only when the community is animated by convictions capable of motivating people to assent freely to the social order" (*Spe Salvi*, 24). The Church has a vital part to play here, through the message of hope that she proclaims. She seeks to build a civilization of love by teaching that "God is love", and exhorting people of good will to enter into a loving relationship with him. Since "love of God leads to participation in the justice and generosity of God towards others" (*ibid.*, 28), the practice of Christianity leads naturally to solidarity with one's fellow citizens and indeed with the whole of the human family. It leads to a determination to serve the common good and to take responsibility for the weaker members of society, and it curbs the desire to amass wealth for oneself alone. Our society needs to rise above the allure of material goods, and to focus instead upon values that truly promote the good of the human person.

The Holy See values its diplomatic links with your country, marked as it is by centuries of Christian witness. Working together, we can help to forge a Europe in which priority is given to the defence of marriage and family life, to the protection of human life from conception to natural death, and to the promotion of sound ethical practices in medical and scientific research: practices which are truly respectful of the dignity of the human person. We can promote effective solidarity with the poor, the sick, the vulnerable, and all those on the margins of society. These values will strike a chord with all those, especially the young, who are seeking answers to their profound questioning about the meaning and purpose of life. They will resonate with all who are anxious to discover the truth that is so often obscured by the superficial messages propagated by post-modern society. They will appeal to all who are discriminating enough to reject the world-view built upon relativism and secularism, and who aspire instead to live in a manner befitting the true nobility of the human spirit.

Your Excellency, I pray that the diplomatic mission which you begin today will further strengthen the bonds of friendship that exist between the Holy See and the Republic of Lithuania. I assure you that the various departments of the Roman Curia are always ready to offer help and support in the fulfilment of your duties. With my sincere good wishes, I invoke upon you, your family, and all your fellow citizens abundant blessings of peace and prosperity. May God bless Lithuania!

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