



The Holy See

***DISCOURS DU PAPE JEAN-PAUL II
AU NOUVEL AMBASSADEUR DE NORVÈGE
PRÈS LE SAINT-SIÈGE****

Vendredi 10 janvier 1986

Mr. Ambassador.

1. At the moment when you are inaugurating your mission as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Norway to the Holy See, I am happy to express to you, with my welcome greeting, my cordial best wishes for the accomplishment of your exalted diplomatic task, and for the well-being of all those whom you represent here.

I am thinking especially of His Majesty King Olav V. Please thank him for the kind message he charged you to convey. I wish him and his family the very best of health and serenity, praying the Lord to help him to preside over the destiny of the Norwegian people, to whom I am happy to express likewise my sympathy and my cordial good wishes.

When your predecessor presented his Letters of Credence as first Ambassador of Norway to the Holy See, on 18 February 1983, I spoke of an historical moment of great importance in our relation. These relations, at the diplomatic level, are now well rooted, and your Excellency will contribute, I am sure, to making them ever more profound and fruitful.

2. You mentioned the period characteristic of the Middle Ages, when the religious and cultural vitality of Norway – I am thinking especially of the epoch of the sagas – exercised a notable influence on Scandinavia and on a large part of Europe, continuing, at another level, the victorious expeditions of your Norman compatriots. And you had the goodness to point out the peaceful and fruitful relations which then existed with the Bishop of Rome and which, by enhancing the role of the Church in your country, facilitated the conscious assimilation of your own values and of the national identity.

These human values are rooted in a patrimony common to all of Europe, profoundly marked by the Christian faith; in particular, the beautiful figure of Saint Olav II, King, symbolizes for ever the belonging of the Norwegian people to Christ, after the baptism of their nation almost a thousand years ago. Today, after the unfortunate division among Christians that followed the Reformation, Christianity, within the framework of the Lutheran confession, remains tied to the social structures of the country.

3. Your State had to fight many a time in the course of history to maintain its independence and to seek with tenacity the prosperity of the country in every respect. Henceforth, it is as a modern State that Norway has wished to establish diplomatic relations with the Holy See, as have a great number of countries in the world. In fact, Norway and the Holy See – recognized with its *sui generis* juridical personality in the international community – can agree on many similar objectives, very crucial for the truly human development of the peoples, for the service of the common good incumbent on governments, and for the relationship of equity and of peace that must be established or strengthened among the nations.

You yourself mentioned democracy, equality, solidarity; you made special mention of the free communication of ideas and of persons, in the line of the Helsinki report, and notably of the free exercise of religion. I am grateful to Norway for contributing its support on this point which is so important to the Holy See, as it is to all the countries attached to a just conception of liberty. It is a matter of the fundamental rights of man, which demand to be respected by all in all things, and without which a civilization would not be worthy of the name.

4. This exigency of the dignity of the person does not allow one to neglect, rather – contrary to the individualism encouraged by certain consumer societies – it calls for the promotion of the people of other countries who are floundering under the heavy difficulties of development and of peace. Solidarity should not remain a word that makes us dream; it requires courageous actions aimed at a new international economic order; it requires cooperation with all of the nations represented at the Organization of the United Nations, and in the first place at the level of the region and of the continent. My recent meeting with the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See (11 January 1986) offered me the opportunity of developing at length this aspect of the universal value of peace. And I know that Norway is concerned with extended cooperative activity, in the framework of the Nordic Council and of the Council of Europe.

5. But all the human projects regarding the well-being of the peoples and the equity of their relations must rely for support on spiritual and moral values in the consciences of the citizens and in those of their leaders at the various levels – from the educators to the governments. You have emphasized the importance of these values, Mr. Ambassador. To be precise, you know – well that it is the proper role of the Holy See to help to promote these values, since its mission is above all of the spiritual order, as witness of the evangelical message entrusted by Christ to the Apostle

Peter and to his brothers. With the Catholic bishops of Europe recently assembled in symposium, I recalled the «model» of the present European society with its positive aspects and with its shadows: sometimes man, in the midst of a superabundance of goods and of knowledge, no longer recognizes the meaning of his life and of his dignity as a being created in the image of God, no longer sees the requirements of love and of stability in the family. He should never forget that his Christian roots are an integral part of his identity and summon him to a new creative synthesis between the Gospel and the present conditions of his life. It is a matter here, beyond that of fidelity to the faith received, of an eminent service to be rendered to our Western societies, in the respect of consciences. For my part, I invite all Catholics to engage themselves in this way, including those who live with you, in the diocese of Oslo, in the prelacies of Trondheim and of Tromsø, and whom I greet with particular affection: they are few in number, but well integrated into Norwegian society. Moreover, moral and spiritual values are certainly the object of the same preoccupation in the other Christian Churches. And this is a further reason to promote ecumenism, which helps all Christians to understand one another better, to respect one another, to work together for the good of their brothers, while at the same time working toward full unity among them. It is also for this reason that I greet here your compatriots, almost all of whom belong to the Lutheran Church.

6. Mr. Ambassador, you represent your country and its major interests. I think that the reflections expressed here are fundamentally at one with these interests. Once again I express to you my fervent good wishes for your mission with the Holy See, for all the Norwegian people, for its Sovereign and all its Government officials. In the midst of the long winters that make your compatriots await with eagerness the return of sunnier days, may God never cease to fill them with his Light and with his many gifts so as to allow them to live in happiness and in peace, in conformity with his will and with his love!

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