



The Holy See

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DALL'ACCADEMIA DIPLOMATICA INTERNAZIONALE**

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1. It is with pleasure that I receive the International Diplomatic Academy on the occasion of its colloquium held at Rome on the subject of the Holy See in the international community. The choice of this theme honours the Apostolic See, and particularly those who represent it to public authorities of numerous nations as well as with international organizations. However, you have been led to widen your perspective and to discover the specific role that the Catholic Church plays in a very diversified way all over the world.

The subject set for your discussions appears to correspond well to the proper vocation of your institution. Founded over sixty years ago now, at the time when the nations were trying to organize their dialogue to overcome the disarray of a first great world conflict, the Academy focused its reflections immediately on the - conditions for peace and on the defence of human rights. In this respect - we hardly need to insist - your objectives are close to those which the Holy See itself pursues when it is given the opportunity to make its voice heard. Thus I am happy to express to you my esteem for your institution.

Within the framework of this meeting, which must of necessity be brief, I will not return to the various subjects on your agenda and which are being dealt with in the learned contributions of universities and collaborators of the Roman Curia. I will refer merely to the principles which always guide the Holy See in its activity within the international community.

2. In the first place, I will simply repeat that in every negotiation, in every meeting, however technical it may be, we desire never to lose sight of the fact that what is at stake is man in the fullness of his vocation. It is always a question of enabling the human person to expand and

develop everything that counts for him: his very life respected and protected; his health; his capacity to earn his bread through labour, while at the same time finding fulfilment in family's life; the preservation of his cultural heritage and the possibility to develop his knowledge and to communicate with other groups; the absence of obstacles set to his free movement or travel; his freedom of conscience; his freedom to adhere to a faith conviction and to practise his religion in community. These comments will suffice to situate my position: man is one; there is no such thing as a decision in seemingly specialized and technical domains which would not have its effect on citizens, workers, families, or the youth or the elderly, the sick or the handicapped, in short, on man in the concrete who has the right to see his dignity safeguarded in all circumstances.

Among you, those who exercise the profession of diplomat know well that your natural mode of action is dialogue. It is good to come back now and then to the conditions which allow such dialogue and the "relations" between heads of States to achieve fully their goal. Apart from the multiple aspects of the technical competences necessary, let us recall the first requirements: not to compromise with the truth, and to respect the other person. The state of mind, the convictions, the culture may be different; the interests and the objectives pursued may be opposed; but in a negotiation, the search for an agreement or for a compromise can never be conducted at the price of a concealment of truth or of a contempt of the partner. To arrive at an agreement, it is necessary that the partners listen to each other and at the same time respect each other and that they be able to trust the word spoken.

Thus enunciated, these requirements will perhaps appear very general or far removed from the realities of daily discussion. Yet is it possible simply to be silent on the subject for the sake of pragmatism? Is one to renounce the ideal because it is difficult to attain? Pope Paul VI wrote, in his Message for the World Day of Peace of 1973, that "absolute and definitive peace among men... can only be an ideal, not an unreal ideal, but one to be realized". I would not hesitate to apply this remark to the requirements of truth in dialogue for the service of every man and of the whole man to which diplomats are called. When one looks at the fears or refusals before the truth, or at the injuries done to human dignity, it is hardly unrealistic to react! To work towards taking up again the ways of truth and of solidarity is not to pursue a wild dream, rather it is to respond to what one expects of responsible and realistic individuals.

In international life, if the Church wishes to make her voice heard, it is not, as you know, by way of intervening on the technical aspects of most problems. Rather she thinks it useful to recall, in season and out of season, the human consequences of numerous practical decisions or of institutional arrangements. And she believes that one cannot fulfil a true service to the human community without an ethical regulation which her experience and independence invite her ceaselessly to set forth. She wishes also to reiterate that the spiritual dimension is essential to man, and even that there is no lasting happiness and peace except when every individual is able to discern the transcendent foundations of this dimension in the depths of his consciousness.

Ladies and Gentlemen, with these considerations I hope to have touched on the concerns present in the mind and heart of all those who work for the good of humanity through diplomatic activity. I know that the task is sometimes difficult, and that disappointments can darken one's view of the road traveled thus far. However, I wish to express once again the esteem in which the Apostolic See holds the indispensable mission of diplomacy and the trust which the highly conscientious and disinterested dedication of those who have this charge inspires.

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