



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MS. MAUREEN ELISABETH MACGLASHAN,
NEW AMBASSADOR OF GREAT BRITAIN TO THE HOLY SEE***

Saturday, 17 June 1995

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you today to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II has appointed you her Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Holy See. I greatly appreciate Her Majesty's greetings, and I would ask you to convey to her my prayerful good wishes.

Your appointment comes at a time of well-founded concern about the unpredictable nature of changes taking place in many parts of the world, and not least in Europe. While the desire for peace, co-operation and development is felt with increasing intensity by peoples everywhere, in Europe the conflict in the Balkans is an open wound, offering the daily spectacle of misery, death and destruction. Speaking to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See in January of this year, I referred to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina as something akin to "the shipwreck of the whole of Europe" because of the way in which international law and humanitarian law are being violated (cf. John Paul II, *Address to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See*, 4 [9 Jan. 1995]). I expressed the hope that there would be a firm and united response on the part of the community of nations. We must continue to hope and pray that the efforts of recent weeks, including those of your own Government, will bring the parties involved to serious and reasonable negotiations without further delay, so that the dreadful suffering of so many people will end, and reason and law will replace the appalling injustices being committed against innocent and defenceless peoples.

The situation in Bosnia, as in other areas of tension, continues to be a test of the international community's will and capacity to give effective expression to the desire which emerged so strongly after the terrible experiences of the Second World War, namely to replace with structures of

co-operation and greater integration the attitudes and policies of competition and rivalry which had hitherto prevailed in relations between States. In Europe, this desire has been the moving force of all that has been done to enhance security and co-operation, from the founding of the Council of Europe in 1949 to the most recent expansion of the role of the European Union. As you know, the Holy See has closely followed the steady development of the structures fostering co-ordination and co-operation in Europe, especially in matters referring to the defence and promotion of the dignity of individuals and their human rights, including their religious rights. On the effective permanence of these values depends the safeguarding of the legacy of freedom and democracy springing from the authentic sources of European civilization. I am confident that the United Kingdom will continue to contribute its own heritage of high standards of justice and solidarity to the task of strengthening the foundations of peace and progress in Europe and in the world, and that in this perspective the British contribution to a solution of the conflict in Bosnia will be productive and motivated by the highest humanitarian goals.

In a more general context, I have often expressed deep concern at the effects on the social fabric of increasing poverty and new forms of marginalization, often closely linked to unemployment and family breakdown. We cannot remain indifferent to increasing social tensions, including intolerance, xenophobia and antisemitism, nor can we ignore, on a more profound level, the consequences of a loss of awareness of certain human values and fundamental ethical principles which have always been the basis of European civilization. The Holy See is concerned to ensure that fundamental values such as a sense of personal responsibility and of obligation to family and community will not be undermined and weakened as a result of an ill-conceived and superficial "culture" of individualism. In the international forum, the Holy See therefore makes a point of calling attention to the need for rights and freedoms to be established on more than simple agreement between individuals – even if they constitute a majority. All rights and freedoms must be based on objective and binding truths and values, and on the awareness shared by responsible people that certain intentions and actions are in conformity with our human dignity and destiny, while other intentions and actions do not lead to the good of the individual or the well-being of society. As I wrote in my Encyclical Letter "[*Veritatis Splendor*](#)", "in every sphere of personal, family, social and political life, morality – founded upon truth and open in truth to authentic freedom – renders a primordial, indispensable and immensely valuable service not only for the individual person and his growth in the good, but also for society and its genuine development" (John Paul II, [*Veritatis Splendor*](#), 101). It is my hope that the peoples of Europe, as they face present challenges, will build on the solid basis of the genuine truths and values of their spiritual and cultural heritage.

Greater co-operation between believers is an essential part of building a more humane and peaceful world. As Your Excellency has mentioned, in recent years there has been a considerable growth of mutual understanding between the Anglican Communion and the Catholic Church, the result of a shared desire to be faithful to the word of Christ as the source of Christian life (cf. John Paul II, [*Ut Unum Sint*](#), 68). More and more Christians in Britain are working together to defend human dignity, to promote peace, to apply the spirit of the Gospel to social life, and to the worlds

of science and the arts. They are increasingly united in striving to relieve suffering and to meet the needs of our time (cf. *ibid.*, 74). Believers have a duty to treat all men and women as brothers and sisters in the one human family; prejudice and enmity have no place in true religion and can never be justified on religious grounds.

Your Excellency has referred to the support of Church leaders for the peace process in Northern Ireland. Each day seems to bring a strengthening of resolve not to go back to the confrontational attitudes of recent decades, but to approach each difficulty on the road to peace with realism and a determination to succeed. The specific contribution of the Churches and Ecclesial Communities will be to facilitate a meeting of minds and hearts in a new spirit of openness and reconciliation, based on obedience to the Gospel commandment of love. As the Third Christian Millennium approaches we are all called upon to examine ourselves in relation to the evils which continue to threaten and degrade humanity, but above all in relation to the good that must be done to remove injustices, alleviate suffering and educate people to full respect for the unique value and dignity of every human being.

Your Excellency, I am certain that as you perform your diplomatic duties you will contribute to strengthening still further the friendly relations already existing between the United Kingdom and the Holy See. I assure you of the cooperation and assistance of the various departments of the Roman Curia, and I pray that you will find much personal fulfilment and satisfaction in carrying out your mission. May God's blessings accompany you, and may he guard and protect the Nation which you represent.

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