



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND*

Tuesday, 17 October 2000 *Your Majesty,*

Your Royal Highness, With enduring memories of our first meeting in the Vatican in 1980 and of your gracious welcome to me in London two years later, I am happy to greet you once again in this Apostolic Palace to which you are no stranger. My predecessors Pope Pius XII and Pope John XXIII first bade you welcome here, and I do the same with a still greater sense of occasion in this Jubilee Year when all Christians sing the praises of Almighty God for the gift of the Word made flesh, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Your Majesty's visit immediately brings to mind the rich heritage of British Christianity and all that Great Britain has contributed to the building of Christian Europe, and indeed to the spread of Christianity throughout the world, since Saint Augustine of Canterbury preached the Gospel in your lands. Through that long history, relations between the United Kingdom and the Holy See have not always been untroubled; long years of common inheritance were followed by the sad years of division (cf. *Address in Canterbury Cathedral*, 29 May 1982, No. 5). But in recent years there has emerged between us a cordiality more in keeping with the harmony of earlier times and more genuinely expressive of our common spiritual roots. There can be no turning back from the ecumenical goal we have set ourselves in obedience to the Lord's command. Yet it is not only the past which prompts us to pursue the path of ever greater understanding and, from the religious perspective, of ever more perfect communion. The future too demands of us a sense of shared purpose. I am thinking first of Europe, which stands at a turning-point in its history as it seeks a unity capable of excluding for ever the kind of conflicts which have been so much a part of its past. You and I have personally lived through one of Europe's most terrible wars, and we see clearly the need to build a deep and enduring European unity, firmly rooted in the genuine human and spiritual genius of Europe's peoples. However, the unity to which Europeans aspire cannot be a structure without content. Only by preserving and reinvigorating the highest ideals and achievements of its heritage – in politics, in law, in art, in culture, in morality and in spirituality – will the Europe of the near future be a viable and worthwhile endeavour. Moreover, at the dawn of the third millennium our gaze must go beyond the bounds of Europe, for the world as a whole has become increasingly interactive and interdependent. The Commonwealth and the Catholic Church are institutions of a very different kind, but both have a proven experience in universality, both know the rich diversity of the one human family. To set the common good as the aim and focus of human thought and action becomes more important than ever at a time when there are increasing disparities in the way the world's resources are shared. Even as we see the forces of globalization holding out the promise of greater prosperity and cohesion, there is an ever growing gap between rich and poor, a gap which is in danger of becoming more fixed and intractable as some benefit from the advances of technology while others are completely left out. This troubling phenomenon has many causes, but the problem will certainly not be solved unless peoples and their leaders accept

worldwide solidarity and cooperation as ethical imperatives that impel and mobilize the consciences of individuals and nations. I cannot but express my appreciation of Britain's recent undertaking to effect a total cancellation of the debt owed to it by the heavily indebted poor countries. The new millennium calls upon us all to work effectively to achieve a world not contaminated by greed, self-interest and the lust for dominance, but open to and respectful of the human dignity, inalienable rights and fundamental equality of every member of the human family. Your Majesty, for many years now and through times of great change you have reigned with a dignity and sense of duty which have edified millions of people around the world. May the Almighty grant Your Majesty, Your Royal Highness and the members of the Royal Family his unfailing light and strength amid the challenges and difficulties of your calling. May he bless the citizens of the United Kingdom with happiness and peace; the Commonwealth with the benefits of a heightened sense of solidarity and cooperation; and the Christian people of your realm with a fresh outpouring of the grace of Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, today and for ever" (cf. *Heb*

13:8).

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