



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO GENEVA  
ON THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (10 JUNE 1969)

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS PAUL VI  
TO THE AUTHORITIES OF THE CONFEDERATION, THE CANTON AND THE CITY OF  
GENEVE\***

*Tuesday, 10 June 1969*

Mister President of the Swiss Confederation, Gentlemen,

It is a very special pleasure for Us to thank you for your welcome, and to greet, in your persons, the highly qualified Representatives of the Swiss Confederation, of the Canton, and of the City, of Geneva

And first of all, it is to you, Mister President, whom We had the honour to meet some years ago in Sachseln, that Our deferential greeting is addressed. Our greeting, if We may presume to say so, is not only the greeting of a one-day guest, but of an admirer and friend, indeed, of a fervent admirer and old friend of Switzerland. How often We have visited your country, and, like all those who come here, have been the beneficiaries of the smiling and generous hospitality which your people know the secret of giving their guests, drawing upon themselves the sympathy of the entire world! In this way, We have learned to know and esteem the qualities of this people, qualities which have remained constant throughout ethnic and linguistic differences; their naturally laborious and peaceful character, at the same time proud and strong, as the sons of your soil can bear witness since, for more than four centuries, and in olden times often in peril of their lives, they have guarded the Pope Himself in the Vatican.

When speaking to the responsible Authorities of the Confederation, of the Canton, and of the City of Geneva, We wish also to speak of two characteristic traits of the way of life and government of

your country, which are most worthy to merit the praise of any impartial observer.

The first of these is the principle of democratic liberty, ensured to all citizens, whatever be their personal, religious or political opinions. Something which little by little, thanks be to God, has become the normal custom of all civilized peoples, was already with you an ancient tradition, dearly bought, proudly defended; a tradition which, We have no doubt, will discover all the applications required by the needs of new times. Indeed, this concept is particularly in harmony with the thinking of modern man, who is so jealous of his autonomy, so distrustful of any intervention of authority which might seem to threaten or limit him.

The Church herself recognizes everything that is positive and beneficial in this notion of human freedom, if understood in the proper meaning; and the two thousand Fathers of the Second Vatican Council agreed in recognizing this when, undertaking a wide examination of the Church's situation in the modern world, they elaborated the text of the Pastoral, Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, and the Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae*, concerning the rights of the human person and of communities to social and civil liberty in religious matters.

By its openly proclaimed and scrupulously observed neutrality, Switzerland has acquired, moreover, the right to become the headquarters of several important international organizations; and in the same way has shown her desire to serve, with ever vigilant attention to the needs of the human community.

The Holy See, We can assure you, is the very first to rejoice at this, and to felicitate you.

These, Gentlemen, are the reflections which this overly brief meeting have suggested to Us; and We would not terminate it without invoking upon you, your responsibilities, at various levels, for the services of your Fatherland, an abundance of heavenly blessings.

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\* ORa n.25 p.2.