



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS*

Saturday, 5 February 1972

We are very touched at the visit you have been kind enough to pay us and it is with the deepest satisfaction that we welcome you to the Vatican today.

You have been Secretary General of the United Nations at a period of human history overshadowed with uncertainties and threats. There are, however, some signs of easing of tension and a more manifest resolution, in some areas, to reach, at last, peace among peoples, the first aim of your Organization, and the object, as you know, of the deepest concern of the Catholic Church. Although the planes and the means are different, your efforts and ours converge towards this aim, which corresponds to such a deep aspiration of the whole of mankind: peace!

What we have tried to do in this field, in the course of the last few years, is well enough known to make it unnecessary to relate it to you in detail here. We mention it only to assure you of the attentive and constant interest with which we follow, and will continue to follow all the initiatives of the United Nations Organization to establish or to re-establish good understanding among all the nations on earth.

There is yet another field, closely connected with that of peace, on which your action and ours meet: namely, the defence of the rights of man, the rights of human groups, and particularly of ethnical minorities. We cannot, without grave danger to society, resign ourselves to the infliction of so many and such painful wounds upon these rights today, in several countries, despite so many eloquent proclamations. The Church, concerned above all with the rights of God, can never dissociate herself from the rights of man, created in the image and likeness of his Creator. She feels injured when the rights of a man, whoever he may be, and wherever he may be, are ignored and violated.

As a result of the choice that has been made of your person, you become the guarantor in a way, before the whole of mankind, of the respect for these rights.

This is redoubtable responsibility, which imposes serious duties on you, but in which all men of feeling are at your side.

As for us, we are anxious to reaffirm before you today what our presence within your Organization showed clearly in the past: we have faith in the United Nations, we have confidence in its possibilities of extending the domain of peace and the rule of law in our tormented world, we are ready to give it our whole moral support. The cause of peace and law is sacred. The obstacles it meets with must not discourage those dedicated to it. Whether they come from adverse circumstances or from the malice of men, they can and must be overcome.

What may seem beyond human forces becomes possible with God's help. We warmly invoke it upon you, Mr. Secretary-General, and on your noble and difficult task, for which you are assured our benevolence, encouragement and prayer.

*ORa n.7 p.5;

Paths to Peace p.59.