



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr IVICA MASTRUKO
AMBASSADOR OF THE SOCIALIST FEDERAL REPUBLIC
OF YUGOSLAVIA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Monday, 27 November 1989

Mr Ambassador,

Your visit to the Vatican this morning marks the beginning of your mission as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the Holy See. I am pleased to accept your Letters of Credence and I ask you to convey my greetings to the Presidency of the Republic and to its President, Dr Drnovsek. On this occasion, I wish to assure you of my deep esteem for all the people of the Federation and of my best wishes for their peace and prosperity.

In your address, you have spoken of the goals of world peace and of an international order grounded in justice and respect for the rights of the human person, as well as of the belief that the elimination of all forms of discrimination is a necessary condition for the peaceful co-existence of the entire human race. These convictions are fully shared by the Holy See, and their defence and promotion constitute the constant aim of the Holy See's participation in the life of the International community. As I have frequently had the occasion to recall, there can be no just and lasting peace among nations and social groups as long as fundamental human rights, and indeed human persons themselves, are held in contempt.

As I wrote in [my first Encyclical](#) over ten years ago, "peace comes down to respect for man's inviolable rights" (*Redemptor Hominis*, 17). This truth should become eminently clear to all in light of the events of our own century. The unprecedented horrors of the last world war were ultimately born of a contempt for the dignity of man. In response to this threat to human dignity and world peace, the international community during the post-war period has felt it necessary to define those fundamental human rights which no person or collectivity is entitled to violate. The resulting

formulations, to which Your Excellency has made opportune reference in your address, provide a sound basis for the promotion of peace and cooperation among nations. It is imperative that they be respected in letter and in spirit.

Within the international community, the Church's defence of human rights is intimately related to her universal religious mission. In preaching the Word of God and imparting knowledge of the law which the Creator has inscribed in nature and in the human conscience, the Church teaches respect for the inalienable dignity of every person and thus serves the authentic good of humanity. Because of her religious mission to work for the integral good of man, "she everywhere contributes to strengthening peace and, to placing brotherly relations between individuals and peoples on solid ground" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 89). The Church claims no technical expertise in the political, economic or social order. Her mission remains specifically a religious one: she seeks to open people's hearts to the truth and, in serving the truth; to expend her efforts for the good of all mankind.

It is the Church's conviction that the rejection of discrimination and injustice can only be the fruit of a human solidarity which is rooted in the brotherhood and equal dignity of all the members of the human family. In our own day, we are witnessing a growing awareness of the powerful bonds of solidarity which unite individuals and nations throughout the world in their search for a truly humane political and social life. In my recent Encyclical "*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*", I pointed to the positive moral value of this awareness, which demands of us " a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual " (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38).

Within the community of nations, the Holy See wishes to foster this moral awareness and encourage initiatives which seek to give expression to it in the changing circumstances of today's world. I am confident that these aspirations are shared by the Government and people of Yugoslavia and will continue to find expression in your concern to protect the rights and legitimate freedoms of individuals and peoples both at home and abroad. As Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, your Nation has a significant role to play in the promotion of dialogue, mutual understanding and peacemaking among countries and social groups.

Within your country, there is a large and active Catholic community. As Pastor of the universal Church, I am pleased to note that the conditions of the local Church in Yugoslavia have seen some improvement in recent years. I am confident that this process will continue and that the Church in Yugoslavia will be granted full freedom in the exercise of her proper mission, also in the field of religious education at all levels and in the spiritual assistance of those who are hospitalized and of those engaged in military service.

It is my hope, Mr Ambassador, that your mission as the representative of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the Holy See will serve to further the spirit of collaboration that has

characterized our relations in the past. In assuring you of the ready cooperation of the various offices of the Holy See in the fulfilment of your mission, I offer you my best wishes and ask God to bless you in the important work which you have undertaken.

*AAS 82 (1990), p.686-688.

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