



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. MR WILBUR DOVEY
AMBASSADOR OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE HOLY SEE****

Thursday, 23 May 1996

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters by which you are accredited as New Zealand Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Holy See. I appreciate your remarks regarding our warm and long-standing relations, and I would ask you kindly to convey to the Governor General and to the Government my greetings and cordial good wishes.

New Zealand is a country of magnificent natural beauty, distinguished likewise by a rich cultural and ethnic pluralism. During my Pastoral Visit there in 1986 I saw at first hand the remarkable diversity which characterizes your society. The resulting challenge is that of enabling people of different cultures to work together for the common good in a spirit of mutual respect and co-operation. New Zealand's historical experience in building a harmonious society continues in the search for ever more just and stable structures of dialogue among its own citizens, as well as in your country's participation in the international community's efforts to implement peace, to help avoid the repetition crimes against humanity, and to act responsibly to preserve the world's resources.

For its own part, the Holy See is convinced that the much-desired goals of justice, peace and an integral development the world's peoples call for both maximum respect for the rights individuals and peoples, and for internationally agreed structures to guarantee and promote that respect everywhere. Pluralism, whether in individual societies or in the wider international community, has to be based on a shared vision our common humanity and an unswerving commitment to the defence of the inalienable dignity and transcendent nature every man, woman and child. Through its presence and activity in the international community, the Holy See seeks to draw attention to

these fundamental prerequisites human coexistence and, in the context a sincere dialogue between people goodwill, it strives to promote them as the foundation a truly just international order.

As you have pointed out, New Zealand is actively involved in the efforts of the international community to maintain peace in areas the world still afflicted by war and its tragic consequences. You are also giving strong support to the international community's desire to hold individuals or groups accountable for violations the most elementary requirements justice and humaneness in situations of conflict. This development will bear fruit if it proves capable promoting a justice based not on force alone, but on a generalized moral commitment to human rights and human dignity. In the end, the most effective antidote to man's inhumanity to man can only be "a justice that incorporates the ideals social solidarity and that patterns itself on the righteousness God" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Homilia in civitate Christopolitana intra Sacrum*, 6, die 24 nov. 1986: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, IX, 2 (1986) 1590).

Ironically, the growing demand for an objective criterion of moral accountability on the international level has in many places come to coexist with the spread of a relativistic approach to truth, an approach in which any objective criterion of good and evil is effectively denied.

The deepest root of this dilemma, which has grave consequences for the life of society, is the tendency to exalt individual autonomy at the expense of the bonds which unite us and make us responsible for one another. Society needs a coherent vision which embraces both the dignity and inalienable rights of each individual, especially the weakest and most vulnerable, and the hierarchy of values which ultimately constitute the common good (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Centesimus Annus*, 47). The symptoms of crisis being experienced by many democracies today point to the urgent need to ensure a sound education in fundamental civic and moral values, and a healthy and free public debate on the ethical dimensions of political and social life.

Inspired by their faith, the members the New Zealand Catholic community are committed to the building of a more just society, not only through their social and charitable activities, but also through their daily witness to the moral truths and values which stand as the foundation of all civic life. As the Second Vatican Council pointed out, it is precisely by this evangelical service that "the Church believes she can contribute greatly towards making the family of man and its history more human" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 40).

Mr Ambassador, as you formally begin your mission as New Zealand Ambassador to the Holy See I assure you that the offices of the Roman Curia will always be willing to assist you in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon you and upon all New Zealanders I cordially invoke the richest Blessings of Almighty God.

**Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. XIX, 1 p.1319-1321.

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