



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr TEODOR BACONSKY,
AMBASSADOR OF ROMANIA TO THE HOLY SEE***

Monday, 27 October 1997

Mr Ambassador,

1. I am pleased to welcome Your Excellency on the occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Romania to the Apostolic See. This meeting is a new milestone in the relations between the Holy See and the noble Romanian nation, a milestone which paves the way to a continually more developed and trusting dialogue.
2. I am particularly aware of the sentiments with which you begin your new mission, of the convictions contained in the words you have just addressed to me, as well as of the attention you pay to the activity of Peter's Successor and of the Apostolic See in international life and in ecumenical relations. I would be grateful to you if you would kindly convey my respectful greetings to Mr Emil Constantinescu, President of Romania. I offer my best wishes to those who have the lofty duty of serving the Romanian nation and to all the country's residents.
3. Since December 1989, Romania has reclaimed her autonomy and is keen to develop all sectors of activity, so that the national wealth may be made available to all her citizens. I am pleased with the efforts made by the authorities to strengthen democratic institutions and to encourage the people as a whole to take an active part in public life with the proper patriotic sentiments. Like all our contemporaries, your compatriots, especially the young, need to be given a profound moral education. This formation provides the principles for guiding them in their personal decisions, in commitments to their country's service and in the relations of brotherhood and solidarity they must develop with all those who live on Romanian soil. As you have rightly pointed out, they must

acquire a deep sense of personal and collective responsibility. Furthermore, this will not fail to broaden dialogue and understanding between all the members of the nation, for its internal unity and its active participation in building the greater Europe.

4. You are aware of the Holy See's attention to the dignity and advancement of individuals and peoples, as well as its desire that each should have his place in national and international life, and be able to make his contribution. In your country, as in other parts of the continent, cultural and ethnic minorities exist as well as human communities which are the result of immigration. They represent a precious resource for the benefit of all, since they can contribute their own characteristics and know-how, thus participating in the national growth and forging bonds between people. Within a society, any opposition between groups, any inclination to think that a particular group coming from abroad and keen to be integrated may represent a danger, can only weaken the country and its institutions, both at home and beyond its borders.

5. In Romania, even if there is an Orthodox majority, Catholics form a living community. They are concerned to devote themselves to serving their brothers and sisters by their involvement in all areas of social life. By their networks of charitable assistance, signs of the love Christ showed the people of his time, the Catholic communities are particularly concerned to aid the most destitute, without distinction of culture or religion. Thus their sole desire is to relieve poverty and at the same time to contribute to fraternal solidarity and mutual aid for all the country's inhabitants, thus fostering national unity.

Moreover, the different local Catholic institutions are devoted to training young Romanians intellectually, morally and spiritually, so that in the future they will take an active, responsible part in public life with respect for their homeland, and so that their personal and community life will have meaning. To fulfil this public, useful task, according to the principles of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (cf. *Dignitatis humanae*, nn. 1-2, 13), the Church needs the authentic exercise of religious freedom and a truly democratic life to be developed, offering everyone the same opportunities for initiative and the same chances, as well as freedom of action for her religious ministers. For, "the freedom of the Church is the fundamental principle governing relations between the Church and public authorities and the whole civil order" (*ibid.*, n. 13). In particular, considering her long experience of school and university teaching, it is important that the Church be able to maintain and develop the educational opportunities she offers the young people of Romania, and to provide Catholic children and adolescents with the catechetical teaching to which they have a right, like their compatriots of other religious beliefs. In this spirit, I keenly hope that the obstacles to restoring the property necessary for the freedom of worship and religion be removed — property belonging to the Catholic Church before 1948 and unjustly confiscated. In the near future, by pursuing a constructive dialogue with the civil authorities, I am confident that the Catholic communities will be able to see concrete and positive signs in this regard.

6. In view of the Year 2000, I repeated the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council's appeal and

ardently urged all Christ's disciples to engage in dialogue in order to achieve that full unity which will be a witness for all the world (cf. Encyclical *Ut unum sint*, n. 1). For this reason, I invited the members of the Catholic Church to intensify their co-operation with the other Churches and Christian communities by engaging in an ecumenism which will bring full communion closer, while respecting their own sensitivities and traditions, and being careful to build on what already unites us. You know that the Catholic faithful of the different rites are always ready to pursue this course. In this regard, I am very pleased with the spiritual attitude with which you are beginning your mission and with your desire to make a significant contribution to the ecumenical process.

7. Your scholarship in anthropology, Christian history and patristics gives you knowledge of the Latin and Eastern philosophical and spiritual cultures. Mr Ambassador, you more than anyone can contribute to increasing the number of bridges between the different Christian traditions of East and West, and to intensifying trustful diplomatic relations between the Holy See and your country, relations which are based on the desire to defend individuals and peoples. Indeed, the principal service that authorities must offer their peoples is to help them further peace and mutual aid, sources of profound joy and growth for the individual and for the development of national communities.

8. As you begin your mission as the representative of Romania to the Holy See, may I offer you my good wishes. Be assured, Mr Ambassador, that you will always receive attentive support from my co-workers and the cordial understanding you may need if your work is to be fruitful and bring you all the satisfaction you can expect from it.

Upon Your Excellency, upon the Romanian people and upon its leaders, I wholeheartedly invoke an abundance of divine blessings.

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