



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr GEORGES SANTER,
AMBASSADOR OF LUXEMBOURG TO THE HOLY SEE***

Thursday, 16 December 2004

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome Your Excellency on this solemn occasion of the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg to the Holy See.

I warmly thank you, Mr Ambassador, for the cordial greetings you have addressed to me from His Royal Highness, Grand Duke Henri. I remember with pleasure his recent visit. I am always touched by his delicate attention to the Apostolic See and would be grateful if you would reciprocate with my respectful good wishes for him, for the grand ducal family and for the People of Luxembourg.

In this season of the year when we turn our eyes to the Prince of Peace who is to come (cf. Is 9: 5), we feel more acutely the tragedies of violence and war that affect so many of our contemporaries, and become aware of the compulsory need to build a future of peace for all.

As the Catholic Church has often recalled, peace and development go hand in hand. Consequently, in our time of globalized exchanges, the richest countries have a special responsibility for building peace. Today, the European countries that formed the original nucleus to avert war and re-establish conditions for lasting peace between them, form a powerful political and economic pole at the core of the European Union that also has a special duty with regard to peace and development. Far from merely wishing to constitute an island of peace and prosperity closed in on itself and obliged to defend itself from external attacks, Europe must continue to be open and set an example. In fact, by sharing her economic, social, religious and cultural riches and in

accepting those of others, she will be carrying out her proper mission. I am sure that your Country, about to take on the presidency of the Union, is working in this direction and is helping in particular to ensure that the process of integration currently under way between the West and the East of the European Continent is also accompanied by the necessary dialogue and increased exchanges between the North and South of our planet.

Mr Ambassador, your Country is one of the most developed in Europe today, and its population enjoys a very high standard of living. Aware of its wealth and the responsibilities it entails, Luxembourg society exercises to the full its duty of solidarity with the poorer countries, especially on the African Continent. I ask your fellow citizens to continue to be hospitable to foreigners who account for a large part of the Country's population. I also ask them to try to create friendly relations between the different social classes to avoid the phenomenon of social alienation that all too often also affects the most developed societies of the contemporary world.

I am delighted to know that your Government is willing to help families by reinforcing the structures of assistance for children and has decided to continue the programmes of religious instruction in secondary schools. Indeed, the young generations must benefit from a sound formation to prepare them to assume their responsibilities in the society of the future.

Above all, they need to be motivated by the strong ideals of freedom, respect and justice among individuals and peoples and the dignity of them all, which are also religious ideals. By having a clear awareness of the values that are at the root of their history and culture and finding fresh dynamism in them, young people will be able to turn more confidently to the future and work to build it with generosity and enthusiasm. Each will then discover that life has a truly altruistic meaning, far more fulfilling than the immediate satisfaction of material needs tied to the restrictive logic of a purely commercial and hedonistic vision of human destiny.

Likewise, to help them in their integral development, this kind of education would foster their inner life and form their conscience, with a view to their making decisions that correspond to the dignity of human persons.

It is also the mission of the Church, which seeks no advantages for herself, to remind our societies of the pressing invitation of the Gospel ideal. This is why she defends with such conviction the inalienable value of human life from conception to its natural end, as well as the greatness of marriage between a man and a woman as the basis of the family and of society. It is in this capacity that she permits herself to intervene in society's debates, to recall what serves the nobility of human dignity and what injures it, sometimes seriously, and to invite Governments to ponder on the importance of the economic, political and ethical decisions they make in order to build an ever more human society.

Through you, Mr Ambassador, I am pleased to greet Archbishop Fernand Franck of Luxembourg,

the priests, deacons and all the faithful who form the Catholic community of the Grand Duchy. I know that they are enthusiastically playing an active part in the life of the Country in the attempt to give the Christian Communities a face that welcomes all, but first and foremost the lowly.

Mr Ambassador, at the time when you are beginning your noble mission to the Holy See, I offer you my cordial good wishes. You may rest assured that you will always be courteously welcomed and kindly assisted by my collaborators.

Upon you, Your Excellency, upon your family and all your collaborators, as well as upon the People of Luxembourg, I wholeheartedly invoke an abundance of divine Blessings.

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