



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Mr CHRISTOPHE DE KALLAY,
MINISTER OF THE SOVEREIGN AND MILITARY ORDER
OF MALTA TO THE HOLY SEE**

Thursday, 14 December 1978

Mr Minister,

My predecessors have quite often had the opportunity to receive a Delegation of the Sovereign and Military Order of Malta, and to express to it their satisfaction and encouragement. But it is a long time since a new Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Holy See has presented his Letters of Credence here. I am therefore particularly happy to welcome Your Excellency and offer you my best wishes for the accomplishment of the mission you are beginning today.

Your words, full of nobility, have just recalled the almost millenary history of unfailing faithfulness with regard to the Apostolic See, in concern to ensure inseparably the defence of faith and service of neighbours.

Many elements of the past have disappeared, as you emphasized. But charity, as St Paul says magnificently, remains for ever, charity which unites indissolubly here below love of God and love of our brothers, and particularly of the suffering members of Jesus Christ. This is the foundation of your action, which is inspired by the Gospel, and which requires from the Knights of Malta the qualities of spiritual life which give it all its meaning and fruitfulness.

Receiving your predecessor in the middle of the last world war, the great Pope Pius XII stressed the help given by the Order to so many innocent victims of the conflict. Are they less numerous now? You know that the miseries to be relieved have not diminished. How, then, could we fail to encourage solemnly again today all those whom you represent here to endeavour to give

themselves more and more, always seeing in the hospitals, leper colonies and the many places where their dedication has the opportunity to bestow itself lavishly, a service of Christ himself, he who, as Pius XII also recalled, "though he was rich, yet for your sake he become poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor 8: 9).

This lesson must be particularly clear to us in these days which bring the celebration of the Nativity close to us. For this reason I express my best wishes that the Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of Malta will continue to carry out its high mission, and I ask the Lord to shower his graces on the Prince and Grand Master, the Knights and Ladies of the Order, and particularly Your Excellency, while I willingly grant the Apostolic Blessing to all.

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