



The Holy See

**DISCORSO DI GIOVANNI PAOLO II
A S.E. IL SIGNOR FERDINANDO V. DE WILDE,
NUOVO AMBASCIATORE DEL BELGIO PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE***

Lunedì, 17 ottobre 1988

Mr. Ambassador,

1. It gives me special joy to receive you for the first time in virtue of the noble mission to the Holy See with which His Majesty King Baudouin I recently entrusted you. I ask Your Excellency to express my satisfaction and gratitude to His Majesty for designating you, and to offer my respectful greetings to Queen Fabiola. Their common loyalty to the See of Peter is very profound: on so many occasions, I myself was deeply affected and happy to have witnessed it.

Today then, Mr. Ambassador, you take your place among the distinguished personalities – and I am thinking naturally of your immediate predecessor, Baron Paternotte de La Vaillée – who constitute the line of Ambassadors of Belgium to the Holy See. Please accept my hearty compliments and my most cordial good wishes. Through you, I feel I am receiving His Majesty the King of Belgium and his Government, but also the good people of Belgium who have won my appreciation on a number of occasions and especially in the course of my pastoral visit of May 1985. I have pleasant memories of my numerous meetings with the principal groups of the Belgian population and I have great hope in the moral and spiritual resources of your nation. I thank you for listing them in your kind address.

2. The Belgium of today, born to independence in 1830, is a young people in the vast concert of a Europe in search of unity, of a new breath of life. The three great ethnographic origins of your country, its remarkable socio-economic developments in the Middle Ages, at the time of the Renaissance, and in our own times. Its artistic heritage of great magnitude and quality, its general culture marked by an early evangelization: these are so many solid roots which give Belgium today a special character and render it capable of contributing much to Europe, to the world and, I

would add, to the Church.

3. It is this noble country that Your Excellency will henceforth have the honour and the charge of representing here, so that the bonds which are already firmly established between your Government and the Apostolic See may endure for the greater good of both parties. With due respect for their competences, these constant and cordial relations have contributed to the dynamism displayed by Belgium in its concrete attachment to the values of a civilization inspired by Christianity. You referred to this in the speech you addressed to me just now. It is also my conviction that these diplomatic links have favoured the marvellous missionary activity of the Belgian Church throughout the world. This vitality of the Belgian people gave rise to the saying that the world was everywhere in Belgium and that Belgium was everywhere in the world.

4. Mr. Ambassador, the noble mission which you are inaugurating today will surely differ from the diplomatic functions you have exercised up to the present. You are accredited to the Apostolic See of Rome around which all the Catholic dioceses of the world branch out. You will be a direct witness of the activity of a Church which has received the mission to be «the light of the world and the salt of the earth», while forming part of the human community, as my predecessor, Pope John XXIII, brought out particularly in the encyclicals *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in terris*. This is why - without in any way taking the place of the Governments in charge - the Church owes it to itself to contribute fundamental and original insights into man, society, and the meaning of history. Far from living in a ghetto, she wishes to contribute to the growing humanization of the human family.

This vision is that of the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Church, in the modern world. From this conciliar document a Christian anthropology can be derived which aims at educating Christians – and more generally men and women of good will – to become fraternal. Without monopolizing the management of the world, the Church, according to the means at her disposal, strives in fact to promote incessantly the bases of a humanity worthy of the name and conformed to God's design. She extols the moral values that are implied in respect for life as the dignity of every individual and of every people, the paths of dialogue as a way of settling tensions or conflicts, the equitable sharing of goods, the priority given to the poorest of the poor, the religious freedom which is indispensable to social peace.

At this time when you are beginning your mission, I am delighted, Mr Ambassador, to hear you affirm that you are fully committed to the path of good diplomatic relations between Belgium and the Holy See.

Know that you will always find here the welcome, the information, the support for which you have a right to hope. Echoing the kind wishes which you expressed to me on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of my election to the See of Peter, I respond in kind with the most sincere wishes for the fruitful accomplishment of your new mission. My good wishes extend to your stay in Rome. May it bring you numerous joys on the ecclesial, cultural, and human level. I invoke upon you and

upon your collaborators in the Belgian Embassy, as also on your home and on your dear country, the most abundant blessings of the Lord.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n. 48 p.4.*

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