



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE DIRECTORS OF POSTAL SERVICES
FROM VARIOUS COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD***

Friday, 31 May 1991

Dear Friends,

1. I am very pleased to have this occasion to meet with the *Directors of Postal Services* in various countries of Europe, as well as in Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Canada and the United States of America, during these days in which you are studying ways of improving communications among continents and nations by means of the services that your agencies can provide. At a time when your responsibilities are no doubt becoming ever more demanding, I wish to assure you of the Church's esteem and appreciation of your work.

As you visit a city so rich in history as Rome, you cannot but recall the long tradition of the post over many centuries in the midst of political, cultural, and social change. It would seem that a form of postal service existed from early antiquity in the Persian Empire, the Greek States and then in the Roman Empire, especially for political and military purpose. In the Roman imperial epoch, postal delivery was greatly expanded along the lines established by Caesar Augustus, so that by the time of Constantine there were provincial magistrates whose sole responsibility was the orderly functioning of the post. With the disappearance of a unified empire, postal communications in the Middle Ages and Renaissance remained limited and sporadic.

It was only in modern times that a truly international postal organization was established: the Universal Postal Union founded at Berne in 1874. For the purposes of the post, all member countries were from then on to be considered a single territory, each member guaranteeing postal service within its boundaries according to regulations and rates that conformed with those of the other members. Despite wars, social upheavals and the radical transformations of society, the post continues to serve people's need to communicate with one another, whether within families

and among loved ones, or for cultural, educational or business purposes. Today, modern technologies open up new possibilities and create new challenges for even greater communications among all the world's peoples.

2. Dear friends, each of you holds a position of great trust within society. To you falls responsibility for the confidentiality of postal communications, and for the safe, prompt and dependable delivery of a vast number of letters, parcels and other pieces of mail. You must also see to the efficient administration of your agencies, and to future needs in light of today's social and technological developments.

But in all this, your service is ultimately directed to the human person, to man, who as I have said in the Encyclical "[Redemptor Hominis](#)", "writes [his] personal history through numerous bonds, contacts, situations and social structures linking him with other men . . . man in the full truth of his existence, of his personal being and also of his community and social being-in the sphere of his own family, in the sphere of society and very diverse contexts, in the sphere of his own nation or people . . . and in the sphere of the whole of mankind" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II [Redemptor Hominis](#), 14).

In serving the human person and fostering community among men and women through postal communications, you also glorify God the Creator who calls man to fulfil his earthly vocation in the light of a transcendent destiny. May this same God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you in your work and enlighten your deliberations during these days. To each of you and to your families I cordially impart my Blessing.

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